ENCHANTED REVOLUTION

GHOSTS, SHAMANS, AND GENDER POLITICS IN CHINESE COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA, 1942-1953

XIAOFEI KANG

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For my mother, Li Zhaoxia 李兆霞,
and in memory of my father, Kang Jidong 康繼東

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Acknowledgments

The seeds of this book were planted during the many trips I took between Beijing and Songpan, in the northwest of Sichuan Province, where I did intermittent fieldwork between 2003 and 2009. Many of the rural and illiterate women I met in Songpan were around the same age as my urban and well-read mother living in Beijing. Both these women and my mother engaged with religion and the Maoist revolutionary heritage in ways that were at times strikingly alike and at other times drastically different. The historical contours that simultaneously linked and separated these two parties living miles apart drew my attention to some critical yet hitherto largely unacknowledged ties between traditional religion and Maoist propaganda among ordinary members of the Chinese public.

The intellectual germination of the book started in 2009 when Vincent Goossaert, Jan Kiely, and John Lagerwey invited me to contribute a chapter on women and religion in twentieth-century and contemporary China to the second volume of their monumental work, *Modern Chinese Religion*, published in 2016 by Brill. Research for the piece pushed me to ask more questions about the interconnected themes of gender and religion in Communist propaganda.

The book comes to fruition after more than a decade of work, and I have accumulated many debts of gratitude along the way. Sarah Schneewind promptly read the entire first draft and offered valuable insights. Vincent Goossaert, Paul Katz, and Mayfair Yang provided comments, suggestions, and support throughout the process. The finished version is in better shape thanks to feedback from Carol Benedict, Megan Bryson, Evan Dawley, Thomas Dubois, Tobie Myer-Fong, Marta Hanson, Liu Xun, Eric Schluessel, Elena Valussi, and Zhang Dongming. I have also benefited from comments and discussions with many scholars through personal exchanges and at conferences. These include Rostislav Berezkin, Victoria Cass, Adam Chau, Cheng Hsiao-wen, Jesse Choo, Cong Xiaoping, Ken Dean, Brian DeMare, Vincent Durand-Dastès, Susan Egan, Fan Xin, Patrice Fava, Josh Fogel, Beata Grant, Ha Guangtian, Valerie Hansen, T. J. Hinrichs, Ho Tsui-ping, Jia Jinhua, Stephen Jones, Lara Kusnetzky, Li Yu-chen, Liu Hsiang-kuang, Liu Jianmei,

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Abbreviations I: Key Terms

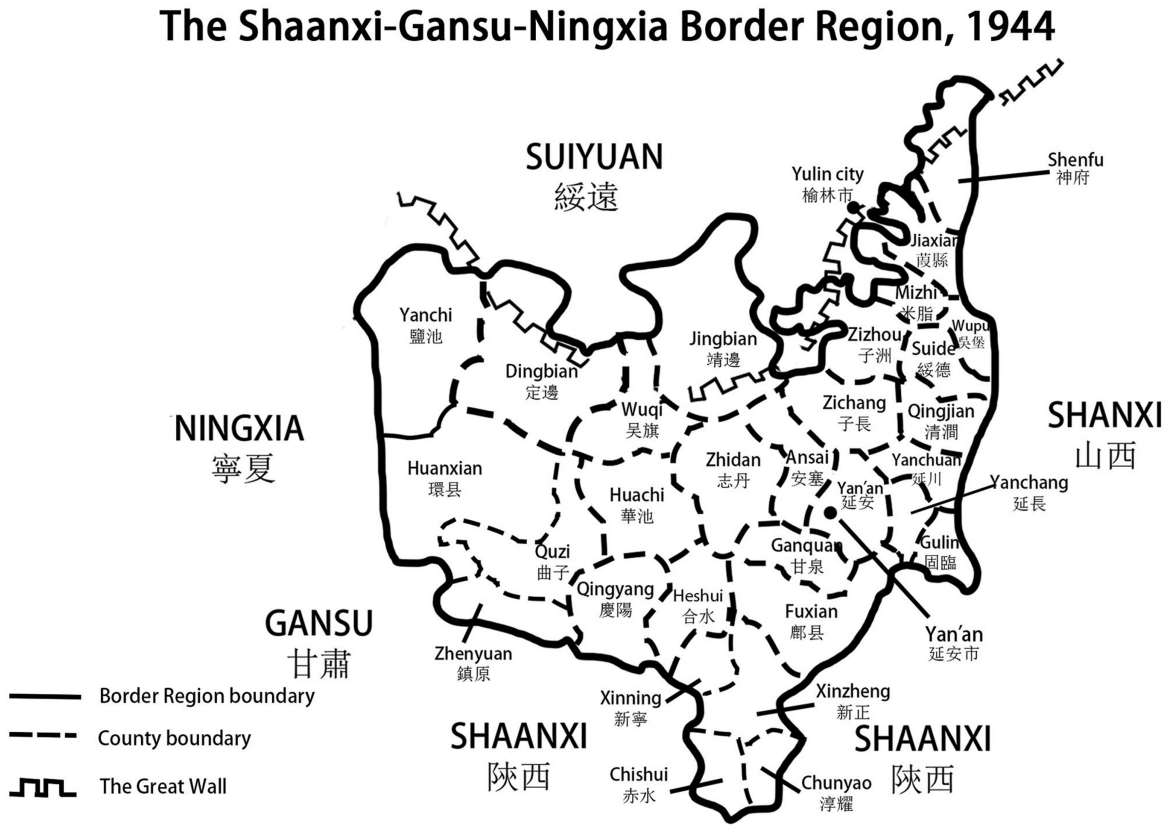
BRCE Convention	Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu wenjiao dahui 陝甘寧邊區文教大會 (Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region Culture and Education Convention)
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
GMD	Chinese Nationalist Party, or Guomindang 國民黨
JCJ	Jin-Cha-Ji 晉察冀, or Shanxi-Chahaer-Hebei 山西-察哈爾-河北
Luyi	Lu Xun yishu wenxue yuan 魯迅藝術文學院 (Lu Xun Academy of Arts and Literature)
Mao's Talks	"Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" (Zai Yan'an wenyi zuotanhui shang de jianghua 在延安文藝座談會上的講話)
NBSC	Northwest Battleground Service Corps (Xibei zhandi fuwu tuan 西北战地服务团)
NLWC	Northwestern Literary Work Corps (Xibei wenyi gongzuotuan 西北文藝工作團)
Party Central	Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
SGN	Shaan-Gan-Ning 陝甘寧, or Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia 陝西-甘肅-寧夏

Abbreviations II: Key Sources and Collections

BNOYS	*Bainian Ouyang Shan* 百年歐陽山. 6 vols. Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2008.
FDWS	*Zhankai fandui wushen de douzheng* 展開反對巫神的鬥爭. Compiled by SGN bianqu zhengfu ban'gongting 陝甘寧邊區政府辦公廳. Yan'an: SGN bianqu zhengfu ban'gongting, 1944.
FLFG	*SGN bianqu falü fagui huibian* 陝甘寧邊區法律法規匯編. Compiled by Ai Shaorun 艾紹潤 and Gao Haishen 高海深. Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 2007.
HSDA	*Hongse dang'an: Yan'an shiqi wenxian dang'an huibian, SGN bianqu zhengfu wenjian xuanbian* 紅色檔案: 延安時期文獻檔案彙編, 陝甘寧邊區政府文件選編. Vol. 8. Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 2013.
HZ	*Hongzang: jinbu qikan zonghui, 1945–1949* 紅藏: 進步期刊總匯, 1945–1949. 428 vols. Xiangtan: Xiangtan daxue chubanshe, 2014.
JFRB	*Jiefang ribao* 解放日報 (rendered in English as *Liberation Daily*)
OYSZJ	*Ouyang Shan zhuanji* 歐陽山專集. Compiled by Fujian shifan daxue zhongwenxi xiandai wenxue jiaoyanshi 福建師範大學中文系現代文學教研室. Fuzhou: Fujian shifan daxue chubanshe, 1979.
RMRB	*Renmin ribao* 人民日報 (rendered in English as *People's Daily*)
RXQS	*Rexue qingshi: Ouyang Shan zuopin yantao lunwenji* 熱血青史: 歐陽山作品研討論文集. Compiled by Guangdong sheng wenxue yishujie lianhehui 廣東省文學藝術界聯合會. Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1990.
WJXB	*SGN bianqu zhengfu wenjian xuanbian* 陝甘寧邊區政府文件選編. 15 vols. Compiled by Shaanxi sheng dang'an guan 陝西省檔案館 and Shaanxi sheng shehui kexueyuan 陝西省社會科學院. Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 2013–2016.
YAWY	*Yan'an wenyi dang'an* 延安文藝檔案. 60 vols. Compiled by Wang Jucai 王巨才. Xi'an: Taibai wenyi chubanshe, 2015.
YWMF	*Yiyao weisheng de mofan* 醫藥衛生的模範. Compiled by SGN bianqu zhengfu ban'gongting 陝甘寧邊區政府辦公廳. Yan'an: SGN bianqu zhengfu ban'gongting, 1944.
ZSLZJ	*Zhao Shuli zhuanji* 趙樹理專集. Compiled by Fudan daxue zhongwenxi 復旦大學中文系. Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1981.

Note on Transliteration and Sources

1. Chinese names, terms, and phrases are rendered in standard Mandarin and romanized in the pinyin system. Chinese characters are provided on first mention in the text.
2. References to dates of newspaper articles appear in the format of month/day/year.
3. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. The original Chinese is provided after the English for rhyming verses and ritual texts to reflect dialectical flavor and to contrast the language of the shamans and folk artists with that of the better educated cultural workers.
4. For titles of newspaper articles in the text, English translations are used, and Chinese citations are provided in the footnote and in the bibliography.
5. Short-title citations are used in footnotes. Full details of all sources are located in the bibliography at the end of the book. Long titles of articles from publications such as the *Liberation Daily* that consist of multiple sentences are abbreviated in the bibliography.
6. Key sources and collected works in which many original sources are republished or reprinted are listed in the second list of abbreviations.



Map 0.1 The Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia (SGN) Border Region, 1944–1945. Based on "The distribution map of *Liberation Daily*'s correspondents in the Border Region" (Benbao bianqu tongxuyuan fenbutu 本報邊區通訊員分佈圖). *JFRB*, 7/23/1944.

Map 0.2 Communist base areas in north and northwest China, 1940s, created by Yang Yaoyuan.

1

Introduction

The Red, the Green, and the White

In 1975, when I was a third grader in a Beijing elementary school, our teacher selected me, along with several other children, to celebrate the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) in a propaganda performance. We were dressed up as little textile workers, peasant tractor drivers, barefooted doctors, and People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers, singing and dancing to the tune of "Chairman Mao Is the Red Sun in Our Hearts." We must have been pretty good because after that we were regularly taken out of class and driven to perform at schools, factories, and government units across the city, together with other student and adult propaganda troupes.

The lyrics of "Chairman Mao Is the Red Sun in Our Hearts" have faded with time, but the dark, messy, and cramped backstage lingers in my memory. The performance program often took up half or an entire day, and while we waited around, we told ghost stories. Every performer-in-waiting, old and young, was excited about the horrific and fantastic. A story that has stuck in my memory is "The Green Corpse." Forty-five years later, I can still see the ghastly face of the teenager storyteller as he recounted, in graphic detail, how a dead female body was found in a desolate place. The corpse had eerily turned green from head to toe, and when her oversized belly was opened up, they found no baby—only dynamite! How did the dynamite get into her stomach? Was this a conspiracy by class enemies to kill an innocent woman and use her body to blow up our socialist infrastructure? Was the green color a prank played by a vengeful ghost? My nine-year-old self was too scared to ever follow the story to the end.[1]

Looking back, what happened on and off stage then seems to be emblematic of the contradictions of Chinese Communist propaganda. Even at a time of radical revolution, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched the most vehement attacks on gods, spirits, and all things religious, ghost stories still fascinated those born during the rule of Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893–1976, r. 1949–1976). Significantly, ghosts even made powerful

statements for Mao and the Party in *The White-Haired Girl* (*Baimaonü* 白毛女), one of the eight "model operas" (*yangbanyi* 樣板戲) that dominated China's stages during the Cultural Revolution. Originally created in 1945, *The White-Haired Girl* features a young peasant woman who, after fleeing from the persecution of an evil landlord, lives a ghostly life in a dark cave until the Communist army brings her back to the sunlit world. Often, just as we screamed at "The Green Corpse" offstage, the drama of *The White-Haired Girl* was unfolding onstage. In many ways, *The White-Haired Girl* provided a bridge between our grateful hymns to Chairman Mao as the "Red Sun" and to our spectral enthrallment with "The Green Corpse." The "Red," the "Green," and the "White" encapsulated the many colors of the same CCP propaganda story.

Scholars of China have dedicated ample studies to *The White-Haired Girl* and other Maoist propaganda works.[2] But most have missed the intrinsic elements of Chinese religion that shaped the opera's narrative of salvation and the CCP's larger discourse of revolution. This oversight indicates some major lacunae in the current study of modern China. China scholars have noted the complex relationship between religion and revolution beyond the familiar stories of suppression and resistance, but few have examined the CCP's overt suppressions and strategic uses of traditional religion as a simultaneous and mutually informed process.[3] Particularly overlooked is how the CCP utilized gendered language and symbolism from traditional religion for the revolution. The prominence of female ghosts both on and off the Maoist propaganda stage suggests that any in-depth understanding of revolutionary politics cannot afford to exclude the intersected themes of religion and gender.

This book explores the tripartite dimensions of the Chinese Communist propaganda story by bringing religion, gender, and revolution together. I take a historical excursion back to what has long been acclaimed by the Party as the revolutionary holy land of Yan'an 延安. Located in Shaanbei 陝北 (northern Shaanxi 陝西 Province), Yan'an was the Party's base and headquarters from January 1937 to March 1947, and it was from there that the CCP leadership consolidated its power and set the course for its future direction. In this book, I examine the Party's first mass campaign against "superstition" in 1944 and 1945, which both targeted shamans and promoted public health. I set the campaign in the broader historical context from the beginning of the Yan'an Rectification Movement (Zhengfeng yunyong 整風運動) in 1942 to the end of the wartime New Democracy policies in 1953—a watershed decade

that fundamentally shaped Maoist revolutionary discourse.[4] From the Yan'an-centered Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia (SGN) Border Region (Maps 0.1 and 0.2), the CCP mobilized the rural revolution and pledged to build a new culture based on the May Fourth ideals of science and progress, Marxist atheism, and class struggle. As such, the Party attacked rural "superstitions" that had supported the foundations of Chinese religious life.

Unlike common conceptions of religion in Judeo-Christian traditions, what constituted the foundations of traditional Chinese religion were not institutional and doctrinal entities such as Buddhism, Daoism, or Confucianism. Underlying the diverse individual and communal practices of Chinese religions, including the Three Teachings (Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism), were common beliefs in *qi* 氣 (breath, vapor, energy) as the essential component of all life forms and in the constant changes of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 as the operative mechanism of a holistic universe. In this religious culture, *yin* demons and ghosts constantly strove to create chaos throughout the cosmos, causing illnesses, death, and natural disasters. The ghosts of young women posed a special danger from the *yin* underworld, for they preyed on the *yang* energy of men in order to come back to life. Households and communities relied on ritual masters—shamans, Buddhist monks, or Daoist priests—to exorcise the demonic *yin* forces by invoking the masculine *yang* power of gods. Ritual exorcism routinely reenacted gender hierarchy as manifestations of the socially and cosmologically conceived *yin-yang* order.[5] It also bolstered a millenarian belief that had inspired many rebellions in Chinese history: in times of crisis, a savior king would emerge to lead a celestial army to ward off *yin* demons and establish a new world order.[6]

As we will see in the following chapters, the CCP's construction of a new culture overtly aimed to remove traditional beliefs and ritual order from rural life. At the same time, the Party co-opted the same cosmic discourse for its own political ends. This paradoxical process occurred in two historical stages, punctuated by the 1945 creation of *The White-Haired Girl*. First, from 1944 to 1945, the campaign against "superstition" promoted public health based on Western scientific norms and specifically targeted village shamans, the mainstay of religious life in the SGN Border Region. The Party developed gendered discourses of labor and science to eradicate shamans and reform "old customs," but the persuasive power of these discourses relied on combining Mao's mass line politics with old ritual structures and art forms deeply embedded in "superstitions." Second, as the anti-Japanese war (1937–1945) ended, the Party moved from social reforms in the remote Yan'an region to

land reform and Civil War on the national stage. Party propaganda invoked imagery of female ghosts to represent the sufferings of the peasant class, and it repackaged traditional narratives of exorcism and salvation into a new political discourse of class struggle. It was up to the Party—the revolutionary cosmic force of life, light, and justice—to deliver the peasant from the historical darkness of class oppression into a new life.

Attending to the intersections of religion and gender in Communist propaganda, this book seeks to revise our understanding of the Chinese revolution. Religion was not just an adversary for the Party; it was also a model. By reexamining the CCP's discourse of gender in relation to social class, the book uncovers the revolution's tenacious connections with China's old cultural system. Because these connections underpin the Maoist legacies that sustain the current regime, they are of continuing importance today. Furthermore, the Chinese revolution's battle with ghosts and shamans differed from the battle against the Church and God in Soviet and Eastern European antireligious discourse. It offers comparative insights into the role of religion in revolution and secular modernity beyond China.

Religion, Revolution, and the Power of Propaganda

By proposing an "enchanted revolution," I invoke Max Weber's famous prediction that science, reason, and modernity would lead to the "disenchantment of the world," in which all forms of religion lose their appeal.[7] Contrary to the Weberian expectation, religion persists in modern societies in many different forms.[8] In fact, the sacralization of politics has become such a hallmark of the modern nation-state that historians such as Emilio Gentile have coined its expressions in totalitarian regimes as "political religion." Through state-controlled mass media, political religion ascribes sacred meanings to a totalitarian state's claim of popular sovereignty and allows the state to monopolize all aspects of private and public life.[9] In Communist regimes around the world, the same propaganda machines that propounded atheism and the socialist "new man" also sacralized the Communist Party and created fanatical cults of personality.[10] The disenchantment of the world has proven to be a myth.[11]

In exploring the "enchanted" aspects of the Chinese revolution, I take the heuristic value of the concept of "political religion" into account, but I argue neither for nor against the existence of a "political religion" in

China.[12] Instead, I use CCP propaganda to explore the intricate and sometimes paradoxical links between traditional religion and the Party-state's efforts to construct a new culture. Historians of the USSR have shown similar links in the Russian experience. According to Victoria Smolkin, the Soviet state's century-long atheist crusades turned the Party itself into "a church" and transformed the atheist ideology "into a religion."[13] Furthermore, Yuri Slezkine demonstrates that Christian-inspired apocalyptic millenarianism significantly contributed to the Bolsheviks' prophetic promises to destroy the old order and deliver a "kingdom of freedom" to the proletariat.[14] Surmising from Slezkine's account, anthropologist Mayfair Yang notes that the "basic categories of millenarian Christian thought endured, even while their contents and meanings shifted to secular revolution and class overthrow."[15] Religion fed the revolution.

Similar to historians of the USSR, China scholars have recognized some connections between religion and revolutionary politics. Political scientist Elizabeth Perry characterizes the CCP mobilization scheme as the "cultural positioning, or the strategic deployment of a range of symbolic resources (religion, ritual, rhetoric, dress, drama, art, and so on) for purposes of political persuasion."[16] From the labor movements in the 1920s to the rural organizations of the anti-Japanese war, the Party frequently mobilized people through traditional oath-taking ceremonies, sectarian rituals, and the organizational structures of secret societies.[17] Historian Vincent Goossaert and sociologist David Palmer show that "revolutionary eschatology and communist ideals found resonance in traditional notions of demonology, messianism, and utopianism."[18] During the Cultural Revolution, the image of Mao overtook the sacred space previously accorded to Chinese gods, while the Party employed the "demonological paradigm" from religious culture to denounce class enemies as "ox-demons and snake-spirits" (*niugui sheshen* 牛鬼蛇神).[19] Up until the present day, the CCP's political legitimization work habitually invokes early Chinese cosmological thought and imperial ruling styles.[20] In different ways, adaptations from religious culture have been valuable assets to the Chinese revolution.

This book pushes the arguments of previous scholars further by exploring more systematically how, in facing a vast rural population, the CCP engineered the revolution by creating new meanings for old knowledge. The protagonist of this book is the CCP propaganda organism, which includes cultural workers, the works they created, and the institutions that supported them, such as press media, drama troupes, and cultural

academies. Mobilizing the "masses" on behalf of the Party, the propaganda organism operated as what historian William Sewell calls the "dominant" agent of the revolution. For Sewell, culture denotes the dialectical dynamics between concrete practices and a system of symbols and meanings of human existence. A historical actor's agency lies in his or her active play (practice) with established norms and commonly recognized symbols (system) to effect cultural change. Sewell calls special attention to the "dialectical dance" between the dominant and the dominated in a totalitarian state. While the dominant reorganizes cultural differences in an officially sanctioned order to create hegemonic power, it is inevitably reshaped by the dominated.[21]

Taking note of this "dialectical dance," I examine how the CCP propaganda consciously and strategically drew on conventional meanings to instill new revolutionary concepts. At the same time, I explore the organic connections between the audiences and the people running the propaganda in order to reveal the "unconscious" underside of the propaganda scheme. Religion pervaded the conscious and unconscious operation of the propaganda organism because it has always been deeply ingrained in Chinese political life.[22] Moreover, the modernist rejection of religion did not result in a decline of elite religiosity. Drawing on personal choices instead of institutional affiliations, Vincent Goossaert postulates four ideal types of late imperial elite religiosity that persisted into the twentieth century. The "fundamentalists" fervently followed one single religious or ritual tradition, and the "sceptics" neither practiced nor cared to learn about anything religious. In between these two extremes were a great many "activists" and "ethnographers": the former did and the latter did not participate in religious activities; nevertheless, both developed intense religiosity through accumulating, discussing, and circulating knowledge of religious culture.[23] This focus on religious knowledge opens up new ways to examine how the CCP cultural elite engaged with religion in the service of revolution.

Indeed, neither the May Fourth "Chinese Enlightenment" in 1919 nor the Yan'an Rectification Movement—both to be discussed below—delivered the CCP propaganda organism within a "disenchanted" vacuum. The propagandists at Yan'an came from diverse backgrounds, including well-known writers and artists, young and urban-educated students, local educated cadres, and reformed folk artists. Even though the CCP allowed little to no room for personal commitment to any religious traditions, to different

extents the cultural workers still lived in the same cultural sphere as the people they were supposed to mobilize, in which beliefs in ghosts, gods, spirits, and a cosmology rooted in the notion of *qi* and the categories of *yin* and *yang* retained their enchanting power to be contested, defended, or denounced. Rather than simply heeding the Party-state's hegemonic claims, the propaganda was greatly conditioned by individual cultural workers' interactions with the existing religious culture. In order to make new ideas comprehensible to rural audiences, many of the propagandists unintentionally fell back on the old knowledge—the same "superstitious" themes and narratives they were supposed to reform or eradicate.

Probing the dialectical dance in propaganda production also means taking the persuasive power of propaganda seriously. Undoubtedly, propaganda in modern societies has been a manipulative regime of ideological control.[24] But this does not warrant its easy dismissal. Literary critic Ban Wang compellingly contends that "even if we concede that Communist literature is propaganda, we still have to consider seriously why it worked—often effectively."[25] Historian Barbara Mittler reinforces Wang's call in her seminal research on the culture of the Cultural Revolution: The enormous impact of Maoist propaganda demands us to go beyond the "manipulative" framework to examine it as part of broad and sincere attempts to create a new culture in modern Chinese history.[26] In contemporary China, the CCP successfully promoted its policies often not by its ideology but rather by how Party propaganda deploys a wide range of "aesthetic resources" that appeal to popular senses and emotions.[27] It is imperative to consider the critical role of religion in the aesthetic production of a new political culture.

Particularly pertinent were the means by which the propaganda disseminated new ideas and generated emotions. What became major propaganda genres—such as fiction, storytelling, and drama—were all reinvented from their imperial-era counterparts. Ritual, theater, and literature had always been intertwined in Chinese religious life, and the separation of religion from fiction and drama did not occur until the turn of the twentieth century.[28] To this day, opera performances still constitute what historian David Johnson calls "the ritual foundations of village life" in northern China.[29] In Shaanbei, *shuoshu* 說書, traditional storytelling, and *yangge* 秧歌, a popular form of song-and-dance play, have been crucial components of ritual exorcism in the local culture.[30] The Communist transformation of old worldviews hinged on how cultural workers

recalibrated the existing social, psychological-emotional, and political impact of narratives in these genres.

From the May Fourth Movement to Yan'an: Religion as Superstition?

Recent scholarship has well documented that "religion" (*zongjiao* 宗教) and "superstition" (*mixin* 迷信) are two modern concepts of Western origin. They arrived in China via Japan in the late nineteenth century and quickly became pivotal issues in the May Fourth Movement, which, named after student protests in Beijing on May 4, 1919, marked a major Chinese intellectual revolution in the early twentieth century. Chinese cultural and political elites promoted a secular, modern nation-state based on the values of science, reason, and progress. They joined forces with religious leaders to reinvent traditional Chinese religions into textually based, clerically oriented, and hierarchically structured national organizations. Successive Chinese states used these criteria to recognize the legal status of five organized religions: Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, and Daoism. All other aspects of Chinese religious and ritual life, such as ancestor worship, ghost pacification, fortune-telling, and spirit healing, were to be eradicated as "superstition." Traditional cosmology had to give way to the power of "science" to explain the world and human existence. Shamans, geomancers, fortune-tellers, and all other ritual specialists were condemned as parasites of society and subject to the state's rehabilitation programs.[31]

An inherent tension, however, existed in the Chinese Communist conceptions of religion. Early Communist leaders championed the Enlightenment values. They supported religious freedom and recognized the role of religious teachings in sustaining the moral and spiritual development of humankind.[32] Meanwhile, taking the Soviet stand of historical materialism and class struggle, Chinese Marxist philosophers maintained that religion only existed in the lower stages of human evolution, when humankind was unable to understand all-natural phenomena in scientific terms. After the triumph of science, reason, and democracy that would attend the future development of a classless society, religion would meet its demise. In this regard, religions were mere illusions created by the ruling class to oppress the working people, or, in Marx's famous words, the "opiate of the masses." Unlike the efforts of the May Fourth reformers to refurbish

religions, the Communists condemned all religions as superstition and tools of class exploitation.[33]

While the early Communist leaders developed their thought about religions within the context of the May Fourth Movement, Soviet influence, and urban experiences with Christianity, Mao's take on religion was closely tied to his experiences of the rural revolution. In 1927, Mao identified "divine authority" (*shenquan* 神權), along with "political authority" (*zhengquan* 政權), "lineage authority" (*zuquan* 族權), and "patriarchal authority" (*fuquan* 父權), as four evils that China's feudal society had imposed on the peasantry. He predicted that once the peasants had successfully overthrown the political authority of the landlord class, the three other authorities would collapse in on themselves. But Mao advised that the Party should not use force to destroy religion abruptly. Rather, through propaganda work, the Party should educate the peasants to enable them to gradually attack religion on their own initiative.[34] Mao's views of religion followed the Marxist tune of class struggle but cautioned against a radical approach in rural practices.

The Party upheld a similar dual stance on religion after it survived the purge by the GMD government in major cities and moved the revolution to the countryside. From 1928 to 1930, the CCP leadership in various mountainous base areas issued orders to confiscate religious properties, ban ritual activities, and deprive religious professionals of political and economic rights. By 1931, however, the CCP seemed no longer eager to carry these ideas into practices. The Jiangxi Soviet (1931–1934) constitution endorsed "the principle of the separation of church and state" and refused to offer state protection of any religion. In the meantime, the Soviet state reiterated that any attempt to confiscate religious properties should not violate the peasants' own free will, nor hurt their "religious feelings."[35] The CCP departed even further from the radical stand in the Long March (1934–1935), when the GMD's military campaigns drove the CCP into a 10,000-kilometer trek through the hostile terrains from southeast to northwest China. The Party required that Red Army soldiers "respect" the religions of ethnic groups to secure the support of local chieftains and access to logistic supplies.[36] Such policies were likely a matter of expediency, since Tibetan exiles later recalled that wherever the Red Army had passed, religious objects had been destroyed and food stocks in monasteries and rich households had disappeared.[37]

At Yan'an, the CCP continued to vacillate between the radical Soviet Marxist and wartime pragmatic approaches to religion. In order to establish the broad United Front against the Japanese invasion, the CCP formed

alliances with secret societies and adopted tolerant policies toward organized religions, especially those of ethnic minorities and of foreign origins.[38] Even so, Mao still specified in early 1940 that the CCP could form the United Front with "some idealists and religious people" in political action, but that "we can never approve of their idealism or religious doctrines."[39] Meanwhile, the CCP promoted "natural science" for economic survival. Using scientific knowledge and technological innovations, Mao hoped to "solve the problems related to the necessities of our daily lives, such as food, clothing, shelter, and transportation."[40] The newly founded SGN Border Region's Natural Science Research Association declared its mission to disseminate scientific knowledge, eradicate superstition, and oppose the "feudal remnants" of ideas and practices.[41] Whether working with the "religious people" or attacking superstition, the CCP's major concern was to survive the wartime period.

The Party's dual stance is well captured in a 1940 article, "The Anti-superstition Outline," published by Party propagandist Hu Qiaomu 胡喬木 (1912–1992, Mao's secretary from 1941 to 1969). In the article, Hu identifies religion with superstition by defining the latter as a belief in the existence of anything supernatural and in the impact of the supernatural on humanity. He places both religion and superstition as the antithesis of science and a tool of class exploitation. While condemning gods and spirits as money-making devices fabricated by religious specialists, Hu associates the Soviet Union's admirable wealth and prosperity with socialism and atheism.[42]

Similar to Mao in 1927, however, Hu adds a cautionary tone to his anti-superstition hyperbole. In addition to advocating close collaboration among the state, educational institutions, and grassroots organizations to fight against superstition, Hu makes careful distinctions between outlaws and ritual specialists and the "masses"—the former should be annihilated and the latter educated—so that the Party would not alienate the rural populace.[43] Hu's accusations of ritual specialists as swindlers echoed traditional elite rhetoric, but they also addressed the Border Region's thorny issue of economic survival. The article maintained the Party's dual stance on religion: ideologically the CCP upheld the rigor of class antagonism against all religions as superstition; pragmatically it tolerated organized religions and counted on science replacing "superstition."

The Gender of Superstition

The conceptualization of gender opened up a special arena for the propaganda's "dialectical dance" with religion. Gender scholars have argued that modern institutional powers, such as the state, school, or military, have played critical roles in perpetuating hegemonic masculinity in given societies. As an ideological construct of social norms, hegemonic masculinity not only supports the patriarchal dominance of men over women but also marginalizes and suppresses alternative forms of masculinity.[44] In early twentieth-century China, the cultural elite resorted to highly gendered narratives to discuss science, religion, and superstition. Like their counterparts elsewhere in colonial Asia, they perceived modernization as, first and foremost, a secular project to "masculinize the nation."[45] Positing Confucian scholars as an effeminate symbol of failed Chinese civilization, the elite defined a new ideal of masculinity informed by science, technology, military skills, and other Western values. Only by aspiring to this modern ideal of hegemonic masculinity could a Chinese man become competitive in the world and could the Chinese nation regain an equal footing with foreign imperialist powers.[46] As we will see in this book, this ideal shaped the CCP's gender discourse to sustain the dominance of the Party-state.

In contrast to the modern masculine ideal, the Chinese elite represented women's religious activities as "superstition." Historian Elena Valussi captures common elite opinions with a statement by the male scholar Xu Dishan 許地山 (1893–1941): "Men built religion, and women made it superstitious."[47] In the male-dominated May Fourth discourse, superstition, along with foot-binding, female chastity, and concubinage, became the hallmarks of the "traditional Chinese woman." As the passive victim of the Confucian past, she was rural, poor, illiterate, and in need of saving for the sake of the modern nation-state.[48]

In alignment with May Fourth critics, the Guomindang 國民黨 (or Nationalist, hereafter GMD) government associated the emancipation of women with the eradication of superstition. Like the Confucian elite in imperial times, the GMD banned the professional practices of the "three aunties and six grannies" (*sangu liupo* 三姑六婆), which included Buddhist and Daoist nuns, female fortune-tellers, procuresses, female matchmakers, shamanesses, brothel madams, female healers, and midwives. Since superstition was construed as an undesirable feminine trait, the dominant political discourse also feminized and emasculated male practitioners of

"superstition," including shamans, fortune-tellers, geomancers, itinerant monks, and other ritual specialists. The GMD campaign against superstition lumped these male ritual specialists in with beggars and prostitutes—all marginal social categories unfit for "respectable" manhood and womanhood. The GMD attacks focused on their innate deficiency of humanity: they were not only "unproductive" and "useless to society" but also physically crippled or blind and hence weak, frail, and sickly.[49] Superstition was for uneducated women and inadequate men.

The same gendered narrative of superstition continued into the Communist revolution. Male Communist feminists in the early twentieth century rejected traditional religion as an instrument of gender inequality. They blamed religion for causing young female suicides in protest of arranged marriages.[50] Mao spoke of religion and peasant revolution in straight terms of gender and age: "Everywhere it has always been the case that only the older peasants and the women believe in the gods; all the younger peasants do not."[51] For Mao, the peasant revolution was a cause of the young masculine force, whereas religion and superstition were associated with the "backward" groups of women and older men.

In "The Anti-superstition Outline" discussed above, Hu Qiaomu compares the working of divine efficacy to the "morals of prostitutes": gods offer better service to whoever pays more. This analogy reflects prevailing May Fourth elite views, which took prostitution as an indicator of national backwardness, and attributed its root cause to economic need: poor women had to sell their bodies to make a living. But Hu's analogy also departs from these views in that it does not project prostitution as a male regime to oppress women.[52] Rather, Hu blames this social evil on the prostitutes themselves, not their male clientele. By this rationale, the analogy holds religious specialists accountable for exercising the "morals of prostitutes" in their invocation of unseen powers. Hu goes on to condemn superstition on three accounts. First, superstition consumes family wealth, kills children, and ruins families. Second, it misleads people to accept the Japanese invasion with fatalism and deprives them of the will to fight. Finally, bandits and outlaws commit illegal acts and collaborate with the Japanese in the name of fake gods and spirits.[53] In Hu's terms, science helps masculinize the nation, whereas superstition debilitates the family and weakens the nation.

The CCP rhetoric of femininizing and emasculating "superstition" defies the gendered order of traditional cosmology and social life. Scholars of Chinese religion have noted constant struggles between the two opposing

forces of *yin* and *yang*, or of ghosts and gods, in Chinese cosmology. Parallel to the imperial Confucian ideology of civil order, the *yin-yang* struggles epitomize a conception of authority exercised by the martial force of exorcism.[54] Like martial arts masters, shamans and other ritual masters are expected to demonstrate hypermasculine bravado in ritual exorcism. They don military armor, wield swords or whips, and dance martial arts displays to slay demons and ghosts.[55] Even more dramatic is the shamans' self-mortifying performance. Taking pride in their supreme *wu* 武 (martial) qualities, shamans would use ritual weapons to cut their own bodies and shed blood; as the symbol of the god's power, the blood is spilled on healing charms and used to spark ritual spectacles showcasing the shaman's masculine prowess.[56] Ethnographic works on shamans in Shaanbei have not reported such bloody scenes, but anthropologists Adam Chau and Liu Jianshu (a native of Shaanbei) confirm that waving swords, shooting arrows, and hacking ritual surrogates of "evil spirits" are important features of ritual exorcism in Shaanbei.[57] As we will see in Chapter 2, Chau and Liu's observations echo the heavily biased yet richly detailed reports that appeared in Communist anti-shaman propaganda. Together they illustrate that, like their counterparts elsewhere, some exorcistic rituals in Shaanbei were and still are characterized by ritual weapons, military metaphors, and masculine allusions.

Historical and anthropological studies offer insights into the political significance of shamanic rituals. Donald Sutton notes that divination cults and spirit possession could inspire mass movements, such as the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864) and the Boxer Uprising (1899–1900), but the power of shamans per se was discursive and individualized, rarely posing an organizational threat to imperial state authorities.[58] Nevertheless, shamanic rituals do hold political significance in the knowledge structure of the Chinese populace. Anthropologists of the Chinese-speaking world show that the ritual interactions are modeled on a political process that involves mutual authentication between a male-centered divine hierarchy and similarly structured imperial state authorities. The deities invoked by shamans embody a range of male authoritative roles in everyday life, from fathers and kinsmen to moral teachers and arbiters. Even after the fall of the last imperial dynasty, political connotations remained in the shamans' rituals as the "chronotypes of imperial China."[59] In sustaining common perceptions of the old social and cosmological order, shamans and their

rituals posed local and subaltern challenges against the hegemonic power of the modernizing Chinese state.[60]

In light of Chinese ritual traditions, the Communist fight against superstition unleashed confrontations between two kinds of masculine power representing two opposing worldviews: science and the Party-state versus "superstition" and the "feudal past." The propaganda would construe the meanings of the female body, sexuality, and masculine ideals accordingly.

1944–45: Critical Years for the Rising Party-State

Opposition to superstition was a crucial part of the CCP's state-building agenda at Yan'an, but its implementation would not be possible until 1944, when the political and economic situation created new demands for the incipient Party-state. The most critical impetus came from a landmark in CCP history—the Rectification Movement of 1942–44. While some argue that the movement's unifying Maoist ideological principles were necessary to reconcile intra-Party conflicts, recent research agrees that it was a major CCP purge that consolidated once and for all Mao's own absolute power and the totalitarian mechanism of the Party-state. Embodied by repressive campaigns within the Party, the movement aimed to eliminate all ideological differences among the cadres and intellectuals and to remold them into "new men." By 1944, the Party-state had emerged from the Rectification as a "single discourse community" centering on Mao and the Maoist Thought, setting the foundation for the future totalitarian state.[61]

The Rectification Movement also established the "mass line" principle for the revolution, a central tenet of what historian Mark Selden famously coined the "Yan'an Way."[62] In 1942, Mao delivered his famous "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" (hereafter *Mao's Talks*), which would define CCP cultural policies for the next thirty years. *Mao's Talks* required that all cultural workers submit themselves to the Party line and to the service of "the workers, peasants, and soldiers."[63] To achieve this goal, the cultural workers had to rid themselves of any creative autonomy, immerse themselves in the language and culture of the masses, and become the "cultural army operating in concert with the CCP's military and political forces."[64] In June 1943, Mao further stipulated that "in all practical work of our Party, the correct leadership must come from the masses and go to the masses."[65] It was up to the CCP's cultural army to make the masses embrace Party ideologies as their

own through propaganda work.[66] In September 1944, Mao further linked the Party's cause with the interests of the people by calling Party members and followers to make all sacrifices to "Serve the People" (*wei renmin fuwu* 為人民服務).[67] These political imperatives intensified the interplay between intellectuals and peasants and their different value systems in the mass line practices at Yan'an.

Yan'an's economy also took a critical turn in 1944. The Party's early policy failures, as well as GMD and Japanese blockades, produced serious economic crises in the Border Region from 1941 to 1943. The CCP implemented a series of innovative policies to address these crises, such as rent and interest reduction, crack troops and simple administration, the cooperative movement, and, most of all, the Great Production Drive, which required all bureaucratic and military units as well as all able-bodied peasant men and women to join agricultural and industrial production.[68] In the meantime, using the euphemism of "special product," the Party deployed state and army units to grow opium and sell it to the GMD and Japanese occupied areas.[69] Even though the CCP monopoly of the opium trade might have played a larger role in resolving the economic crises, the propaganda understandably credited the recovery to the Great Production Drive. Any remaining "parasitic" members in rural society, such as shamans, must be brought into the labor force.

On a national level, by 1944 both the GMD and the CCP had begun to look beyond the war for national leadership. In August 1943, the GMD accelerated its plan to eradicate "the Communist bandits," and a month later, it announced that within a year after the war, the GMD would implement a constitutional government.[70] Keen on winning domestic and international support, Mao soon criticized the GMD proposal of constitutional government as deceptive but also took it as an opportunity for the CCP to seek a legitimate position in the postwar government.[71] Mao envisioned the new government to be built on the New Democracy policies that he had formulated back in 1940. He designated the New Democracy as a transitional phase between the existing feudal and capitalist society and the socialist future. As such, the CCP would forge an anti-Japanese United Front with the GMD and other social and political forces. Culturally, Mao defined the New Democracy as a "national, scientific, and mass culture," which involved selectively integrating Western elements into Chinese forms, "elevating" peasant culture with science, technology, and socialism, and making culture a "powerful revolutionary weapon for the broad masses of the people."[72] Mao's New Democracy dominated CCP's wartime political and cultural policies.

The postwar prospect provided a new momentum for Mao's New Democracy. On March 22, 1944, Mao delivered a long speech at the National Conference on Propaganda Work held by the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter Party Central). While touting the CCP's political, military, and economic success, Mao called for a major shift of Party priorities to cultural construction, focusing on educating the rural masses with newspapers, schooling, and art. In particular, he designated medical work and hygienic knowledge essential means to popularize science and eradicate superstition. The GMD government had launched similar campaigns during its Nanjing decade (1927–1937), but its campaigns hardly ever reached rural Shaanbei, which at the time had been wrenched by droughts, famines, warlords, bandits, and Communist rebels.[73] Now, Mao predicted that the success of the cultural construction would make the SGN Border Region "an even better model for the whole country."[74] A year later, Mao declared that the New Democracy was "more progressive, more developed, and more complete than [Sun Yatsen's] Three People's Principles."[75] He henceforth positioned the CCP as the legitimate leader of a postwar democratic government.

By 1944, then, it had become politically imperative and economically plausible for the CCP to build a "national, scientific, and mass culture." It was immediately after Mao's speech in March 1944 that the Party launched the "New Culture Movement," comprising an anti-shaman campaign along with a public health campaign. Later that year, from October 11 to November 16, the Party held a major Border Region Culture and Education Convention (hereafter BRCE Convention) to further the New Culture Movement. Mao joined other top leaders to endorse the New Culture Movement's pledge to fight against "feudal, superstitious, illiterate, unhygienic, and other old habits."[76] The anti-superstition rhetoric, which had hitherto remained mostly on paper, finally hit the ground. So begins our story for this book.

Methodology, Sources, and Terminology

This book takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of propaganda, examining texts such as newspaper reports, Party documents, and works of art and literature, along with memoirs, archives, and local histories. I also explore the intersections of textual studies with ethnographic work on local religious life. This approach reveals the multiple rhetorical devices and rival

schemes of different propaganda agents. It also illuminates chasms and intersections between what propaganda claimed to do and what actually happened.

The nature of the propaganda materials, which were meant to be widely publicized, allows my main sources to survive in libraries, archives, and museums in Beijing 北京, Xi'an 西安, and Yan'an. Party documents, newspapers, memoirs, and archival materials from the Yan'an period have been systematically compiled and printed by major Chinese presses in recent years. Many of them are made available through digital databases. Unlike the Rectification Movement or other politically charged events, topics such as the elimination of superstition and public health are seen to boost the Party's progressive image and so are more likely to be published as part of the Yan'an legacy. Memoirs and other materials can also be found through many online sources. Through critically comparing, contrasting, and examining these diverse sources, we can unravel the revolutionary propaganda in both depth and breadth even when it has become impossible to access certain archives.[77]

Ethnographic work is a critical part of this research. I made two fruitful trips to Yan'an in May 2014 and May 2018. During the trips I held conversations with local scholars, visited temple fairs, and participated in a healing ritual performed by a female shaman. I also interviewed a male shaman, a family member of a renowned folk storyteller, and a lay ritual specialist locally known as the *yinyang* 陰陽 master.[78] In addition to visiting museums, libraries, and revolutionary sites, I made a one-day investigatory trip seventy kilometers north of Yan'an, where a "Red-Shoed Demoness" (see Chapter 5) wreaked havoc more than seventy years ago. The fieldwork adds important insights into what the textual materials have elaborated or eluded.

Parts II and III of the book deal mainly with Communist literature and the performing arts: some are revolutionary classics; others are obscure or long forgotten. Having benefited greatly from research by literary scholars, I do not try to explain the works' popularity (or the lack thereof) based on their artistic values. Rather, my focus is to explicate their artistic representations with the CCP's construction of gender and religion in relation to revolution.

Several key terms need explanation. Scholars have tended to distinguish shamans from spirit mediums: the former are male and specialize in ecstatic flight; the latter are women, usually of low status, and prone to spirit possession.[79] These definitions may not apply in the case of China.[80] While Chau and Liu find that spirit possession is the dominant form of shamanic practice

for both men and women in Shaanbei, the CCP reports on shamans from the Yan'an period are not always clear about whether any spiritual journey was involved.[81] For the sake of narrative clarity, I use "shaman" freely in this book, referring to spirit men and women in Shaanbei without making distinctions between spirit possession and ecstatic journeys. I reserve the term "spirit medium" for the fictional female character in Chapter 7, since the story was set in a different place from Yan'an and she was not a target of the Yan'an anti-shaman campaign. I also use "ghost" and "demon" interchangeably for *gui* 鬼 in our texts, for the Chinese *gui* could mean either ghosts as the lingering souls of the dead or demons or spirits as dangerous creatures associated with death, illness, or other unknown threats from the *yin* world.[82]

I forgo quotation marks for the frequent appearances of "superstition," "peasant" (*nongmin* 農民), and "masses" (*qunzhong* 群眾). The preceding discussion already makes clear the embedded bias against traditional religious practices in the term "superstition." Likewise, "peasant" and "masses" are politically charged concepts in the Maoist revolution. The CCP inculcated the new concept of "peasant" into the mind of the rural population to wage mass struggles against the "landlord class."[83] Mao defined the "masses" to include a broad range of social classes in the anti-Japanese United Front and the New Democracy, but designated the core of the masses to be always peasants, workers, and the laboring class.[84] With or without quotation marks, we need to be aware that both terms served to establish class consciousness for the revolution.

Overview of the Book

The book consists of three parts in eight chapters. Part I, "The Campaigns," studies the rhetoric, methods, and goals of the anti-superstition mass campaign (comprising interrelated anti-shaman and public health campaigns) as it was disseminated in the Party newspaper. The campaign took male shamans and their ritual power as the main targets of attack. With highly gendered rhetoric, the newspaper cast the Party-state as a new ritual master to save the lives of rural women from the persecution of shamans (Chapter 2). The Party carried out the campaign through public trials and mass meetings of confessions. It exercised legal and political power to turn shamans from parasitic "loafers" (*erliuzi* 二流子) into productive and "heroic" laborers (Chapter 3). The ultimate goal of the campaign was to

eradicate shamanic practices and replace them with the miracles of medical science (Chapter 4). In these processes, Party agents relied heavily on religious and ritual traditions to execute both Mao's mass line principle and the Rectification mechanisms.

Part II, "The Stories," investigates how CCP-sponsored works of art and literature endeavored to follow but often diverged from the Party's campaign messages. Propaganda workers performed anti-superstition plays and stories to educate the masses, but their intended messages were buried in popular fascination with ghosts and spirits in the old culture of entertainment (Chapter 5). Communist fiction created a new peasant hero who took the elimination of superstition as the key to rural prosperity, but such a hero lost significance as the Civil War abruptly ended Yan'an's social reforms (Chapter 6). In the anti-Japanese warfront far away from Yan'an, one propaganda worker's story advocated anti-superstition messages in the name of free choice of marriage. The immense success of the story rested in the author's native knowledge of local religious culture. It had little to do with Party directives from Yan'an (Chapter 7).

Part III, "The Magnum Opus," examines the 1945 opera *The White-Haired Girl* as a major turning point for CCP propaganda. Departing from the anti-superstition theme, propaganda workers invoked the cosmic redemption of female ghosts in configuring the female body and sexuality as emblematic of class exploitation and national liberation. This narrative of salvation created a renewed ethical and cosmological rationale for CCP leadership in building the New China and set the future direction of revolutionary art and literature (Chapter 8).

By way of conclusion, the last chapter discusses the historical, contemporary, and comparative significance of bringing religion and gender into the Communist revolution. Far from a black-and-white story of suppression and destruction, the book illuminates the red, the green, and the white that make religion an inherent part of the Chinese revolution.

PART I

THE CAMPAIGNS

2

A Time to Heal or a Time to Kill

On April 16, 1944, a crowd of more than two thousand local residents gathered in the city plaza of Yan'an to witness a public trial held by the Yan'an county judicial court in conjunction with several other sectors of local government. The culprit on trial was Yang Hanzhu 楊漢珠, a male shaman from the Baijiaping 白家坪 village in the suburbs of Yan'an. Yang was accused of having murdered Bai, the twenty-six-year-old daughter-in-law of the Chang 常 family. Woman Bai had passed out after having a miscarriage. Yang denounced the modern medicine brought by a doctor from the government-run hospital, claiming instead that Bai was afflicted by a "ghost" (*guibing* 鬼病), thought to be a common cause of illnesses in the Chinese therapeutical tradition.[1] In light of that, he performed a series of exorcist rituals, during which he allegedly whipped, burned, and pierced iron nails into Bai's body until she breathed her last. The rituals were not only deadly but expensive: they cost the Chang family over 1 million yuan and drove them into bankruptcy.[2]

On April 29, 1944, a stern account of the trial, titled "Yang Hanzhu, the shaman of Baijiaping Village of Yan'an, Is Sentenced to Imprisonment for Manslaughter," appeared alongside an editorial titled "Carry Out the Anti-shaman Fight" on the front page of the *Liberation Daily* (*Jiefang ribao* 解放日報), the CCP's official newspaper (Figure 2.1).[3] By linking details of Yang's trial with the Party's general directives, the paired articles ushered in an intense campaign against shamans in the SGN Border Region. From April to October 1944, *Liberation Daily* published forty-eight anti-superstition news reports. In 1945, it published thirty-four. In the heat of the campaign, the SGN Border Region government published an anti-shaman booklet with the same title as the editorial mentioned above, and most of the stories in the booklet came from the *Liberation Daily*.[4] As we will discuss in Part I of this book, the campaign singled out male shamans as central targets, and the newspaper articles established a gendered rhetoric for the campaign accordingly. The rhetoric served the nascent Party-state to contest the masculine

Figure 2.1 Mu Qing's news story and Lu Dingyi's editorial on the front page of the *Liberation Daily*. *JFRB*, 4/29/1944, marked out in the two black boxes by the author.

ritual order of rural society, and to bring shamans into the labor force for the Great Production Drive.

The focus of this chapter is to analyze the campaign rhetoric designed to denounce the shamans' ritual healing practices. Section 1 discusses the *Liberation Daily*'s strategic pairing of the anti-shaman editorial with the news story about the trial of the shaman Yang Hanzhu. Together the two pieces set up essential guidelines for the campaign. Section 2 examines how the same strategy was used to link a Party journalist account with a shaman's confession. The parallel narratives were designed to establish the Party's epistemic authority over shamanic practices, but inadvertently they also reveal hidden tensions between official indictments of shamans and the shamans' self-perceptions of their ritual power. Section 3 returns to the opening story of Yang Hanzhu to discuss the significance of the female body for anti-shaman propaganda. Using gendered rhetoric to subdue male shamans, the propaganda strove to establish the Party as the new ritual master that would save young women and the feminized rural people from China's "backward" traditions.

1. Carrying Out the Anti-shaman Fight

The *Liberation Daily* was the Party Central's mouthpiece in the 1940s. Founded on May 16, 1941, it ceased operations on March 27, 1947, when the CCP headquarters moved out of Yan'an to evade imminent GMD military attacks. While it was being published in the base area, the paper undertook the mission to convey all Party directives to the civil and military cadres and to guide them in the implementation of the directives among the rural populace. From the beginning of the Rectification Movement in 1942, the Party tightened its ideological control of the newspaper. Mao provided regular instructions on its daily operations and frequently contributed his own editorials and essays. He handpicked Lu Dingyi 陸定一 (1906–1996) as its general editor in order to sideline the Soviet-trained Bo Gu 博古 (a.k.a. Qin Bangxian 秦邦憲, 1907–1946). A loyal follower of Mao, Lu headed up the Red Army's Propaganda Department during the Long March and the Eighth Route Army's Political Department thereafter. Upon taking over the *Liberation Daily*, Lu cut reporting on international affairs to focus on CCP policies.[5] He also established the principle that everything the paper published, from daily news to editorials, had to be approved by the

Party Central, and that the editorial office would have zero tolerance on "autonomy" and "liberalism."[6] Lu's leadership brought the paper into the Party's tight grip and marked its shift away from the Soviet-leaning Party elite to Mao's personal leadership.

In order to efficiently exercise the newspaper's persuasive power, Lu and the Party had to take into account the high illiteracy rate among its targeted audience. According to CCP statistics in 1944, the Party governed a total population of 1,500,000 people, over 90 percent of whom were illiterate.[7] In some counties, the illiteracy rate ranged from 57 percent to 85 percent among district level cadres, and 100 percent for almost all women cadres below the district level and all cadres below the township level.[8] By late 1944, the Border Region government hailed it as a great feat that 60 percent of its cadres could read the *Liberation Daily*.[9] Since the Party counted on grassroots cadres to deliver Party policies and campaigns to the masses, the newspaper made deliberate efforts to use simple language and a straightforward format.

The *Liberation Daily* also developed formulaic devices to maximize the effect of propaganda. To announce major policies and launch political campaigns, the paper consistently featured a front-page editorial, written by Mao, other Party leaders, or Lu Dingyi at the behest of the Party. To elucidate Party directives in concrete terms, the paper usually published a "factual" news story side by side with the editorial. Together the two pieces provided factual credibility and theoretical guidance on behalf of the Party. After launching the campaign, the newspaper would periodically follow with news stories, reports, and opinion pieces, in order to show popular support and provide models for the rural population.[10]

The process of reporting and disseminating Party directives followed Mao's adage of 1943 that they should "come from the masses and go to the masses."[11] The editorial office dispatched reporters to collect "factual" stories from the villages and solicited contributions from local cultural workers. The paper repackaged the collected information into news stories and editorials. It also published so-called letters to editors or quoted local people in its news stories. Doing so would present Party directives as the masses' own initiatives. The newspaper would be circulated among the populace through the newly implemented mechanism of village organization. These included entities such as regular newspaper reading groups, community blackboard bulletins, night school study groups, and public meetings.[12]

The anti-shaman campaign exemplified these propaganda mechanisms. To start the campaign, Lu Dingyi first sent a young journalist named Mu Qing 穆青 (1921–2003) to investigate the above-mentioned trial of shaman Yang Hanzhu.[13] He then published Mu's report alongside his own editorial. Lu's decision met initial opposition from Bo Gu, who was the nominal head of the *Liberation Daily* and had shunned "social news" as tabloid journalism characteristic of "bourgeoisie" vulgar taste. Lu convinced Bo that the Party newspaper should publish a different kind of social news that would help "transform customs and maintain the law and order of the society."[14] As a result, Mu's story was published, and Mu later claimed it to be "the first piece of social news in the history of the Party newspaper."[15] The paper's turn to social news was part of the Party's shift in 1944 toward the economic and cultural life of the Border Region.

Having reached the consensus with Bo, Lu spins Mu's story in his editorial to expound both the urgency and scope of the anti-shaman campaign. He depicts shamans as a vile force in rural society, at a ratio of three shamans in every 400 people (0.7 percent), and describes them as "loafers" or opium addicts. Lu follows imperial and modern critics in condemning the immoral economy of shamans and their rituals, accusing shamans of fabricating nonexistent gods and spirits to swindle money.[16] But he goes further. Just as Yang Hanzhu's crime shows, Lu suggests, shamans not only extort money from people but can also take lives with their rituals. The death of a patient would generate a greater popular fear of gods and spirits, thereby creating more demands for the shaman's services. Lu thus frames shamanic healing as a "murderous business."

After denouncing shamans as killers, Lu announces that a long-term campaign should be carried out to eradicate shamans from the "New Democratic Society." He urges local government agencies to use the trial of Yang Hanzhu to educate the masses as well as to ban shamanist practices, punish practitioners, and help them "give up evil and return to good" (*gaixie guizheng* 改邪歸正). Finally, Lu calls upon doctors of both Chinese and Western medicine, schoolteachers, and other educated people to actively promote modern medicine and help the masses distinguish doctors from shamans: the former save; the latter kill.[17]

Lu's long-term goals of rehabilitating shamans and implementing modern medicine are the subject of the next two chapters. For now, let us focus on the central message of the first part of Lu's editorial: claiming to be healers, shamans are in fact killers.

2. Parallel Narratives, Contending Voices

After outlining Party directives in pairing Mu's story with Lu's editorial, the *Liberation Daily* published another pair of articles on June 18, 1944: an oral transcript of a first-person narrative titled "Shaman Bai Conghai's Confession" and a report titled "The Shamans' Scams," also penned by Mu.[18] The confession and the report authenticate each other: the former reveals the individual shaman's quackery from an emic perspective, whereas the latter takes an etic point of view to survey and classify the entire range of shamanic practices that the newspaper deems to be superstitious and fraudulent. The pairing served the propagandist purpose of exposing "The Many Evil Crimes of Shamans."[19]

Mu's account imposes a secular lens on Bai Conghai's confession. We see a typical Foucauldian disciplinary mechanism at work here. According to Michel Foucault, any classification scheme is in itself the working of power. It shatters old familiar thought, establishes a new conceptual framework of cultural categories, and produces a mechanism of social control.[20] Foucault also contends that confession in modern society is the "most highly valued technique for producing truth." The process of making confession effectively subjects the penitent to the authority of those who demand, hear, and judge that confession.[21] As we shall see, while Bai's confession proves a shaman's esoteric knowledge as a "scam," Mu's report claims more complete expert knowledge on shamans than any individual shaman. The formulaic pairing of Bai's confession and Mu's report again served to establish the Party's moral and political authority to reshape the rural culture.

Indeed, at first glance, Mu's report gives the impression that he knew everything about local shamanic practices. It starts by listing a total of seven categories of religious specialist: *shenguan* 神官 (spiritual-official), *shipo* 師婆 (or *nüwu* 女巫, female shaman), *wushen* 巫神 (shaman), *fashi* 法師 (ritual master), *mengxian* 夢仙 (dream diviner), *qiansong* 遷送 (soul deliverer), and *majiao* 馬腳 (horse lads, a local term for male shamans). Mu claims that the third category, *wushen*, was both the most popular in the region *and* a general local term for all seven categories.

Mu's list of the seven categories, however, does not reflect the fact that these were local terms for ritual specialists whose services might have varied yet nevertheless overlapped.[22] According to Adam Chau and Liu Jianshu, there are two kinds of shamans in Shaanbei: *wushen* are from the Han Chinese

dominated regions, and *shenguan* are found further north in areas bordering Inner Mongolia. Known for their signature ritual weapon, the "three-pronged broadsword" (*sanshan dao* 三山刀), *wushen* have "proper gods" as tutelary deities. S*henguan*, in contrast, use goatskin drums, an obvious influence from Mongolian shamanism, and serve lower ranking "ghosts-turned-gods." Chau and Liu further note that *majiao*, not *wushen*, is the general term for all shamans in the local language.[23] Mu, however, generalizes *wushen*, a term that both locals and nonlocals would have understood, over the peculiar term *majiao*, which would have been incomprehensible to nonlocals. Mu's choice thus superimposes the campaign's nomenclature of the *fan wushen* 反巫神 (anti-shaman or struggle against shamans) onto the local language and practices.

While Chau and Liu find that all shamans in Shaanbei, male and female, serve their deities through spirit possession, Mu separates the seven categories into two types, according to the degree to which the shamans are capable of "scamming" in the name of gods and spirits.[24] The first type "pretend to be gods and ghosts themselves," and the second specialize in "the dirty business of sending off gods or catching, exorcising, and beating ghosts." Mu warns that the second type is particularly "barbaric and cruel," because these exorcists have taken many lives by imposing all kinds of violence upon their patients, including "poking steel needles," "ironing the flesh," "lying down on the blades of long knives," and "burning pubic hair."[25] Mu's categorization accentuates the violent nature of shamanic rituals and supports the campaign message that shamans are killers.

Regardless of which category they fall into, Mu states, all shamans follow two formulas to make a diagnosis: "spirit hexagrams" (*shen bagua* 神八卦) and "ghost hexagrams" (*gui bagua* 鬼八卦). That is, shamans assert a correlative cosmology between time periods and one's state of health. Each day is presided over by a particular spirit, and one falls sick as a result of making involuntary offenses against that spirit. Shamans associate men's health with *yang* gods and women's health with *yin* ghosts: they use the spirit hexagrams to find the culprit spirit for male patients and use the ghost hexagrams for female patients.[26] Other than the formulas for making diagnoses, Mu lists more than twenty kinds of everyday ritual services, most of which reflect the shamans' ritual roles in sustaining individual and community health. From his inclusion of hexagram diagnoses to the extensive list of practices, Mu's account is interspersed with dismissive remarks on the irrational nature of the shamans' scams.

Mu seems to have offered a fact-based classification of shamanic practices, but his classification superimposes a different system of organization on the existing tradition. Local people surely must have all seen, heard, or experienced the various ritual procedures offered by shamans, but they would not have thought about the same sort of classifications as those listed in Mu's report. Moreover, rarely would they have been exposed to such a complete gamut of shamanic rituals in such an organized manner all at once. The familiar ritual details in Mu's report might easily connect with the rural populace through their interest in the magical and the dramatic. They would want to hear more. But instead of experiencing rituals for healing and exorcism, the rural folks were now expected to learn about the new categories as well as to criticize them in newspaper study sessions and at mass meetings. Mu's report uproots shamanistic rituals from the traditional worldview and throws them in to a secular framework imposed from an authoritative political level. Party media hoped that local people's familiarity with the ritual tradition predisposed them to accept, seemingly without question, the Party's accusations of the shamans' "scams."

A Shaman's Pride

We know nothing about the shaman Bai Conghai other than what he says about himself in his confession. A man from Ansai 安塞 County, he had been a shaman since 1930 and surrendered his three-pronged broadsword to the government after having witnessed the public trial against his fellow shaman Yang Hanzhu. With fifteen years of practice, he had accumulated enough "crimes" to produce a useful confession for the campaign. No doubt, his confession was supposed to add credibility to Mu's report. When comparing the two pieces, however, the gaps between the two narratives become apparent, even though the confession must have been heavily edited by the Party newspaper.

A central point of hidden contention lies in the shaman's martial vitality in exorcistic rituals. Mu's report, as well as his earlier report on Yang, highlights the vicious violence being imposed by shamans on their patients, but Bai mentions the ritual violence as what a shaman routinely inflicts on *his own* body to create spectacle. In his confession, Bai writes about such spectacles. He appears to mock himself for using his three-pronged broadsword to cut

his arms and bang his head until they are bloody, while claiming to feel no pain. He also repents for dishonestly appearing to come off unscathed after hacking his bare belly with a sharp-edged chopper or licking a fiery iron rod with his tongue.

Bai's confession is meant to deny a shaman's supernatural potency. Bai confesses: "Skin and flesh, we were all born of mothers and fathers. How could we not feel pain [when we hurt ourselves]? But in order to swindle money, we have to pretend. . . ." He then reveals the secrets behind these scams. Before he cuts his arms, he slaps them repeatedly to numb them, and then makes a light cut to bleed just a few drops. When he bangs his head, he is in fact performing a simulation of sorts: he ensures the broadsword makes a loud sound, without actually making the contact with his head that his performance suggests. When hacking at his belly, he uses one hand to do the cutting and the other to simultaneously resist the blade. As for the fiery iron rod, he washes his mouth with vinegar, thus coating his tongue with so much saliva that he would not feel the scorch of the burning iron.[27] True or false, once these secrets are revealed, the invulnerable body becomes ordinary flesh, and the shaman is relegated from ritual warrior to clumsy magician.

Coincidently, Bai's alleged confession used familiar ritual scenarios from late imperial times to expose the deceptive nature of shamanic healing.[28] Yet, while imperial authorities suppressed shamans mainly to assert their own access to the unseen worlds, Party media attempted to couch ritual efficacy in secular terms.[29] Skepticism of a shaman's ritual efficacy, the shaman's pride, had always been part of rural life. Citing Claude Lévi-Strauss on "the sorcerer and his magic," Ann Anagnost argues that credulity and skepticism of shaman magic can coexist as long as there is a social consensus on the power of the supernatural. One shaman's failure does not discredit other shamans, nor does it necessarily lead to a belief in science.[30] People were willing to hire shamans because they believed in their special skills in accessing the unseen world, and some were seen as more efficacious than others. By publicly exposing the shaman's esoteric skills, the Party propaganda sought to destroy the social consensus of traditional rural life and prod people into believing in a different logic with similar magic power. The spiritual bond between shamans and the unseen were mere magician's tricks. One shaman's sham is all shamans' sham. The Party hoped to change the logic to crush the shamans' pride. At the same time,

it attempted to shift the object of popular respect from shamans with their connection to the supernatural to Party agents with the capacity to expose such "scams" and uncover scientific "truth."

The *Liberation Daily* places anti-shamanistic jargon in confessional narrative. However, it sometimes accidently preserves the shaman's positive assertion of his ritual prowess. For example, while the newspaper often features female patients as victims, Bai atones for having done harm to all: men, women, and children. This seems to confirm the official complaint made elsewhere that shamanic healing was pervasive in Shaanbei due to a lack of doctors. When Bai states, "I have been a shaman for fifteen years. . . . I don't know how many people I have treated, nor how many lives I have wasted," one is left wondering just how he could have sustained a business based on deception and taking lives for so long.[31] Moreover, even with the self-abasement presumably required of Bai, one still cannot help but detect a hint of suppressed pride.

In repenting the treachery of his "magic," Bai admits that he was a loafer and chose to become a shaman to "win respect": if he cured people, they would credit it to his patron gods and praise his extraordinary skills. If he failed, he would avoid blame because it was a common understanding that "the gods only cure illnesses but don't extend lives."[32] His statement indicates the social consensus that, until the campaign rhetoric kicked in, local people accepted the limits of a shaman's healing powers and did not consider shamans as killers even if they often fail to cure. Nor did this "respect" come from mere scamming: Bai describes the complex ritual procedures and social skills he had mastered and details the prices people were willing to pay for his services.[33] His allusion to a shaman's social prestige is corroborated by Wang Xiangrong 王向榮 (1952–), a folk singer from today's Shaanbei. According to Wang, to the present day his fellow villagers stand in awe of a village shaman's "mysterious air" and uphold the shaman as being the "most knowledgeable about the village's ancient local culture." Although dubbed by official media as the "song king," Wang concedes that he cannot master the intricate meanings of the many songs that have been traditionally sung by shamans in ritual settings.[34] Suffice it to say that compared to farming, which in local language was literarily referred to as "suffering" (*shouku* 受苦), the shaman trade required a sophisticated skillset that could earn one both respect and wealth. Even with apparently compliant intentions, Bai's confession still diverges from the intended campaign rhetoric.

Contending the Martial Power

Two healing rituals take up the most space in both Mu's report and Bai's confession. The first is "sweeping souls" (*saohun* 掃魂), or "summoning souls" (*zhaohun* 招魂). The second is "descent to the underworld" (*xiayin* 下陰). The differences in Mu's and Bai's narratives on the same ritual may illustrate how Mu's account manipulates traditional knowledge to assert control.

The first ritual, "sweeping souls," was a common practice in Shaanbei, and the concept harks back to ancient funerary and restorative rites that survive today in various forms.[35] Both Mu and Bai note that the ritual proceeds in four steps: setting up the altar (*qitan* 起壇), making a hexagram inquiry (*zhangua* 占卦), expelling the illness (*rangbing* 禳病), and protecting one's body (*hushen* 護身). Mu, however, uses four disparaging phrases to summarize the procedure: "hacking the straw man, chanting incantations, puffing and glaring, and dancing with the three-pronged broadsword." He sees little significance in the four steps because they are all about "heat and noise" (*renao* 熱鬧). What truly matters, he says, is the "the concrete methods of healing" and the "the ending summary," or the true purpose, of the ritual.[36] He thus describes that once a shaman has reached a divination diagnosis about the location of the lost soul, the process of "sweeping the soul" would proceed this way:

> The shaman uses a needle (*zhen* 針, a play on the word *zhen* 真, meaning true, pure) to sew a piece of red cloth onto a green cloth. The red cloth represents the lost soul of the patient; the green represents the horse on which the soul rides. The shaman then pins the horse on the patient's shoulder—for men on the left and for women on the right—and the higher it is, the better the chance of recovery. Then the shaman finds a family member born in the year of either the horse or the rooster; he dresses the family member in red (upper) and green (lower) and instructs this person to hold a basket in one hand and a broom in the other. The person walks around sweeping the floor and calling up loudly for the return of the soul, until the shaman finally locates the soul and collects it into the basket. The two then return to the altar in the patient's home. The shaman circles the altar three times each, clockwise and counterclockwise, patting the patient with the basket. The process purportedly returns the soul back to the body of the patient. Sometimes, when the shaman searches for the soul all by himself, he receives a chicken as extra compensation.[37]

In Mu's account, then, the ritual appears to be detailed but uneventful. But the level of detail here is important. It indicates how much Mu had mastered this subject and thereby established his credibility and authority to write about it.

Bai, by contrast, writes at great length on the four steps that Mu summarizes in four brief phrases. All of Bai's four steps are imbued with martial content and masculine rigor. Setting up the altar is an elaborate feat in itself. The process starts with the installation of incense, paper money, and an incense-holding bowl on a table, on which tablets to gods and the dead souls of the hosting family are erected. Bai would cover the table with a piece of cloth; under the table he would place hemp cords, a red-cloth knot, seven copper coins, and a handful of millet. Peach tree branches would be set aside in a basket along with a hatchet, a pair of scissors, a rolling pin, a straw man, four lamps, and one tiger made out of dough. He would also stage two hay choppers (big and heavy knives with wide blades), each on either side of the altar table.[38] The hay choppers and tools in the basket are exorcistic weapons that foreshadow the shaman's battle cry.

Once the altar had been set up, Bai would put a handkerchief and five paper flowers on his head, spray clean water on and around the altar, and strip himself to the waist—a demonstration of masculinity common in exorcistic rituals elsewhere. He would then dance around with the three-pronged broadsword, assuming frightening poses and making loud noises to call upon gods and scare away demonic spirits. The dance designates the sacred space in which to enact the magic of his ritual power. The gods would descend during the dance, and the shaman would then toss sticks to ask for hexagram diagnoses. These would help him decide why the patient has lost his or her soul, which kind of spirit had caused the illnesses, and which ritual treatment he should use. The shaman's dance also creates ritual spectacles, or scenes of "heat and noise," a defining feature of Chinese ritual life that validates a shaman's magic in the eyes of the public.[39] Mu's summary completely omits these actions and the mood they evoke. The omissions render the shaman's magic illogical and ridiculous, lacking the vitality and ritual power of Bai's account.

The third step, the exorcist battle of "expelling the illness," has not yet even begun in Bai's account. Now the patient would lie down on the *kang* 炕-bed (a kind of adobe platform built across one side of a room, to be used for sleeping, dining, and socializing in north and northwest China), surrounded by four lamps on four sides. The shaman leaves the dough tiger on top of the

straw man below the *kang*-bed. He then takes up a bow and arrow, aims in the direction of the patient (and the straw man), and begins to recite:

> Shoot it up, shoot it out.
> Shoot it to clean out the sick's bed.
> Shoot at the heart in the front, empty the heart in the front;
> shoot at the heart in the back, empty the heart in the back.
> Shoot at the neck cord (which the ghost had tied onto the sick person),
> shoot the handcuffs on the wrists.
> Shoot the hobble that stumbles at the foot.
> Shoot the spirits, shoot the ghosts, shoot out the ancestors' dead souls.
> Those who died of knife cuts will be shot out,
> Those who died of a hanging death will be shot out.
> Those who died of opium smoking will be shot out.
> Everything will be shot at the straw man.
>
> 射起身, 射離身,
> 病人床上射乾淨.
> 射前心, 空前心,
> 射後心, 空後心,
> 脖子有項射了項 (按:係鬼牽著病人的東西),
> 手上有肘(手銬) 射了肘,
> 腳上有絆射了絆.
> 射神來, 射鬼來, 老家老親射離身.
> 刀砍的, 射離身.
> 吊死的, 射離身.
> 洋煙鬧死的, 射離身.
> 一切射在草人身.[40]

The shaman recites similar incantations as he uses each weapon that he has placed in the basket one by one. Clearly, the shooting is targeted at all kinds of ghosts that could have potentially invaded the patient's body and caused illness. As the last line of the incantation indicates, the straw man serves as the surrogate for the demonic spirit harassing the patient; it is thus the physical target of shooting, hacking, cutting, and beating in the ritual. Mu's four phrases do not acknowledge the shaman's military valor, seen as crucial to driving the ghosts out of the patient's body and reclaiming the patient's health.

Having expelled the ghosts, Bai explains, the shaman proceeds to the fourth and final stage and invokes a wide range of gods to "protect the [patient's] body." He would start with the Bodhisattva Guanyin and the Four Buddhist Heavenly Kings. Then he would add ten layers of golden armor onto the patient's body as he chants the names of gods in the following order: the City God, the Er-lang Warrior-God, local mountain spirits and the earth god, the Five Emperors of the Five Directions, Gods of the South and North Dipper, the Eight Buddhist Vajra-Warriors, the Celestial Maiden of Nine Heavens, and the ten lords of the underworld. These gods were believed to possess martial powers of cosmological or local significance, and female deities such as Bodhisattva Guanyin and the Celestial Maidens of Nine Heavens also bestowed the golden armor that would shield the patient from demonic invasions. The invocation would be finished by final blows to the straw man:

> Hack the straw man, to substitute the sick man.
> The sick man has been substituted, so will extend his life span.
> All disasters dissipate into dust and sand.
>
> 斬草人，替病人.
> 替了病人命長人.
> 一切災殃化灰塵.[41]

For Bai, ritual healing is perceived as a fierce battle between the *yang* gods and *yin* ghosts, and the four steps of setting up the altar, making the hexagram inquiry, expelling the illness, and protecting one's body matters the most in such a ritual. He therefore dedicates much space to "repenting" on these ritual actions, marked by shooting, hacking, chanting, and dancing. In contrast, Mu's focus on the search for the lost souls erases any involvement of Bai's patron deity and emphasizes Bai's monetary incentives. Looking down on the shamans through secular lenses, Mu refuses to present the soldierly nature of the exorcistic ritual.

The shaman's masculine valor is further contested in the newspaper's coverage of the second exorcistic ritual, the "descent to the underworld." Mu and Bai agree that this ritual was much less used because it was more dangerous and more expensive. This time, Bai is brief and somewhat evasive. If the sick person comes from a wealthy family, Bai says, he will exaggerate the gravity of the illness: the remedy is for the shaman to dig a small

pit, two or three feet deep, and use it in a soul-searching journey to the other worlds. The shaman would crawl into the pit after sunset and totally bury himself, leaving only a tiny hole through which a rope is passed and connects him to a bell hanging on a pole in the patient's courtyard. Incense sticks would be burned outside the pit, and someone would stay up and periodically report to the buried shaman: "The cocks have crowed!" "It is nearly dawn!"[42] The common understanding of this ritual was of "being buried alive."[43]

The monetary rewards for performing the "descent to the underworld" ritual were attractive, but Bai admits that he "only dared to do it several times a year when I was young and don't dare to do it now that I am getting old." He goes on to name two famous male shamans who had died of suffocation during the process.[44] Simply put, having passed his prime, Bai no longer had the courage and stamina to carry out this demanding ritual. He therefore does not elaborate further, either on himself or his patron deities in this ritual procedure.[45]

Mu fully exploits this self-declared weakness. He starts by rewriting what Bai said, but discredits his sincerity in the procedure, an utmost factor upheld by shamans to ensure ritual success.[46] Instead, Mu explains Bai's cowardice and slyness with scientific rationales. The shaman would always keep three objects in the pit: a lighted lamp to calm him, water in a basin to help absorb his body heat, and a live chicken to indicate whether there was enough oxygen left in the pit. As soon as the chicken started to choke, the shaman would ring the bell, and his assistant would dig him out.[47] Mu derisively plays up the shaman's anxiety, using vivid details to portray how a fretful shaman tossed, turned, and desperately held onto the tiny hole above the pit for the thin breath of life. What Bai skips, Mu greatly elaborates.

All in all, in surveying the entire gamut of shamanic practices in an "organized" manner, Mu seeks to establish an authoritative voice over these practices. Based on seemingly rich ethnographic knowledge, Mu turns the shaman's numinous powers into cheap tricks. He conjures up the martial valor of shamanic healing only to refute it to serve the campaign's rhetorical goals: such valor is nonexistent in the meaningless "heat and noise" of the ritual, or it is cowardly and sly when a shaman has to save his own life. As we will see in the next section, Mu also presents the shaman's martial valor as destructive when used on young female patients. By all accounts, Mu's portrayal is at serious odds with Bai's masculine perceptions of the figure of the shaman.

3. Sexual Violence and a Gendered Narrative of Persecution

True or False: What Did Shaman Yang Do?

Bai Conghai's confession does not just undermine Mu's parallel report. It invites us to reevaluate Mu's earlier portrayal of the trial of Yang Hanzhu that opened this chapter. Did the shaman Yang whip and burn Woman Bai's body, or did he instead, following the same ritual procedure described by Bai Conghai, inflict punishment on a ritual scapegoat like the straw man? Since Mu's story on Yang initiated the anti-shaman campaign at the behest of the Party to begin with, let us revisit it and examine how it established a gendered rhetoric for the campaign.

In Mu's story, Yang had injected "three steel needles" into Woman Bai's hands and below her nostrils when she first showed symptoms of headache and stomachache. Later, to further beat the demon out from her body, Yang flogged her with peach tree branches, swept her house with fire on oil-tipped brooms, and lit firecrackers in front of her. At night Yang performed a ritual of "sending off the demon" by dragging the pregnant woman out to the village mill in harsh winds. He ordered her to kneel down after having walked around the mill and threw firecrackers on top of her head until she passed out and was carried home. Following that:

> The shaman . . . stripped her completely naked. In addition to beating her with peach tree branches and donkey's hooves, he tied Bai's two middle fingers with thick shoe laces and tightened them up with chopsticks, until the laces had pressed into her flesh, squeezed out her finger bones, and made her bleed profusely. In the meantime, he forced donkey and horse dung into her mouth. The most terrifying was that he burned an iron stick in fire. Insisting that the demon was hidden in the woman's nose, he cruelly ironed her nostrils with the stick. He even burned yellow papers [used to worship gods and hence possessing exorcistic power] on her genitals, and as a result he not only burned off her pubic hair but also burned in numerous blisters between her legs. Anyone who had heard her piercing screams would have been terrified. When some pleaded for Bai, the shaman threatened that he would stop the treatment. After such terrible torture, Bai was unable to breathe and died that night.[48]

The violence depicted here is appalling. But is it convincing? Mu reports that he learned everything from the victim's family, including that Yang was Woman Bai's cousin on her mother's side and that he took the job at her mother's request.[49] Mu mentions these family relations as background information with no significance for the event itself. He tells readers that at the trial Yang was found guilty of killing not only Bai but also several other young women in similar previous healing rituals. Later, he reports that a propaganda worker had witnessed a murder of a similar nature committed by another shaman elsewhere.[50] Based on such evidence, Mu presents violence as a shaman's ritual norm and murder as in the nature of a shaman's healing business.

Mu's account, however, raises several questions. First, male scholar-physicians did assume textual authorities on gynecological knowledge; nevertheless, from imperial to modern times, matters of childbirth in rural areas had always been in the domain of midwives or other female healers.[51] CCP accounts elsewhere reveal that female shamans were around. In one case, as many as four female shamans attended, and failed, on one delivery.[52] Local custom also expected a pregnant woman's mother to be present several days before the delivery to help her through childbirth and the lying-in period.[53] In Woman Bai's case, hiring a male relative would not have made her treatment any better than it would with a female healer. Nor did the relationship save the family any money—Yang's rituals reportedly bankrupted the Changs. Why, then, did Woman Bai's family invite a male shaman to handle her prenatal complications in the first place?

Second, family relations carried great weight in Shaanbei's patriarchal communities. On what basis would Bai's mother and the Chang family have allowed the ritual torture to last for days on end? What moral liabilities were at stake for everyone witnessing the violation of the woman's naked body? Women in rural Shaanbei did practice sexuality more freely than that prescribed by the rigid Confucian code of female chastity.[54] Still, it would have been inconceivable for Bai to have been exposed and violated by a male relative/healer, under the watchful eyes of her family, when female healers were available, and when a straw man could have sufficed as the ritual surrogate. Mu does not address these questions.

Family relations especially mattered after the woman had died, when no more healing cost should have been incurred. Why did Yang still request, on behalf of her natal family, that the Changs provide an extravagant funeral,

with seven layers of clothing and an expensive coffin? Why did the husband's family comply, even at the risk of bankrupting itself? In local custom, a daughter-in-law's natal family could make such outrageous demands only when she died prematurely, either from domestic abuse or from childbirth, as a result of the marital family's violation of certain local taboos. In either case, a young woman's death would trigger her natal family to take a customary action called the "riot for the life" (*zao renming* 遭人命). The natal family would select a respectable and quick-witted male leader to request spiritual and material compensation from the marital family, often resulting in great financial loss and social humiliation to the latter.[55] What role did Yang play in the postmortem settlement between the two families? Were there any hidden intrafamily politics behind Bai's death? Mu's sensational story leaves many logical loopholes unexplained.

It is also hard to determine whether physical violence was a common feature of exorcistic rituals in Shaanbei. The Party newspaper later quotes several shamans saying that they had reprimanded Yang and that their practices were utterly different from his.[56] The shamans either told the truth or, more likely, said so to save themselves from becoming targets of the campaign. While Bai Conghai's confession points to the straw man as a liturgical routine and to self-mortification for ritual spectacles, we may never know what Yang's true intentions were: while in custody, he refused to say anything to Mu other than acknowledge that he had killed Woman Bai.[57] At the trial, Yang presumably defended himself by claiming that Bai was too physically and mentally weak to endure his treatment.[58] But this certainly does not explain the violence he enacted, brutal enough to send even the strongest and healthiest to their graves.

Neither ethnographic nor historical studies offer clear answers. The late imperial male elite absolved themselves of bodily violence but supported self-mortification by religious specialists and by women defending their chastity.[59] In late Qing (1644–1911) Jiangnan, local officials forbade women to expose their bodies when these women played the ritual roles of penitents in City God temple processions.[60] Most studies of exorcistic rituals in the Chinese-speaking world, as in the shaman Bai's confession, ascribe the object of ritual violence to either surrogates or ritual specialists themselves.[61] But in the Daoist rites of the "summoning for investigation" (*kaozhao* 考召), which have had a deep impact on popular religious practices, both possibilities—use of a surrogate or of a patient's own body—existed. As historian Edward Davis has shown, Song dynasty (960–1279) ritual masters interrogated

illness-causing demons by summoning spirit-soldiers to "seize, bind, flog, pummel, yoke, burn, freeze, or crush" the demon inside the patient's body. If the patient was too frail, a surrogate—often a child medium—would step in. Davis points out that the ritual torture was modeled after imperial-era judicial torture, and aimed to extract confessions from the demon. Sometimes, however, a demon could be so humanized (e.g., a loving ancestor) during the ritual that harsh judicial torture of the demon morphed into mere theatrical performance.[62] In either case, the purpose of the ritual was to torture the demon, not the patient, who should not feel the pain because she or he was possessed by the demon.

The significance of Yang's trial will be discussed further in the next chapter. Suffice it to say here that even Lei Jingtian 雷經天 (1904–1959), then chief justice of the Border Region high court, acknowledged that the just-stated logic was exactly why fellow villagers saw Yang's ritual as harmless: "He has not beaten the woman but only the ghost!"[63] Village logic, however, went unheeded as mere superstition. For the Party-state, Yang's ritual was not a ritual *mimicry* of judicial torture. There was no ritual surrogate, and the female patient endured all the pain. In Mu's telling, Yang was a criminal who killed for money.

The Female Body, Sexuality, and the Politics of Patriarchy

For Mu's readers, the most sensational part must have been Yang's sexual violation of Bai. In his article, Mu forsakes possible family politics to sensationalize the crime as one committed by a male shaman against a young woman. He thus places the female body at the center of the anti-shaman campaign rhetoric. Mu's account reflects a common wartime propaganda strategy to use the violated female body to mobilize against what historian Louise Edwards defines as the "masculine enemy other."[64] The CCP and GMD troops frequently accused each other of mass rape and sexual mutilation of women in the 1930s. From the 1930s to 1940s, anti-Japanese propaganda cartoons depicted Chinese women being raped and mutilated by Japanese soldiers. Likewise, Japanese authorities in northern China accused CCP guerrilla soldiers of the same atrocities.[65] The destruction of the female body stimulated fighting morale and justified the need for hypermasculine leadership. Far back from the anti-Japanese front line, the Yan'an propaganda used

the same gender motif to construct shamans as a masculine enemy other in the CCP's social reforms.

Yang's ritual torture also connects Mu's story to a modern literary tradition that construes legal justice with gendered violence. Literary critic David Wang shows that in condemning the corrupt judicial system, late Qing fiction has a penchant for describing the spectacle of corporal punishment of women, whose naked bodies were ironed by "burning-hot metal instruments with nipple-like points" or who were forced to wear "red-embroidered shoes" made from iron. The fictional accounts instigated heightened sensations, providing the reader a sense of both catharsis and indignation. The CCP legal system banned corporal punishment, but the spectacle of the public trial remained a central feature. Such spectacles were often reenacted in Communist literature along with the "blood and tears" of the victims.[66] As the first and most publicized campaign story, Mu's report uses the gruesome details of Yang's trial to instigate a similar kind of catharsis and indignation to those provided in late Qing fiction. It reinforced the CCP as the true arbiter of justice and aimed to spur action on the part of the masses.

Mu's portrayal of Yang's sexual violence, however, also differs from wartime propaganda and late Qing fiction in its specific focus on a young woman's *reproductive* body. The shaman's supposed charlatanry killed both woman and baby. Yang's trial occurred amid the CCP's accelerated drive for rural socioeconomic development in 1944. At this time, the government repeatedly expressed concerns regarding high infant mortality rates, unhygienic customs of childbirth, and widespread gynecological diseases. These issues will be the subject of Chapter 4. For now, Mu's account reflects the CCP's intention to take control of rural women's reproductive bodies to ensure population growth and labor supply in the Border Region. And ritual healing by shamans stood in the way.

Women's fertility and maternity served the patrilineal and patriarchal family system of Chinese society. Late imperial Neo-Confucian familism reinforced the male elite's patriarchal control over women's reproductive bodies in at least two ways. First, male scholar-physicians increasingly claimed authoritative knowledge over women's reproductive bodies, and their epistemological authority marginalized the lower-class and illiterate female healers who had always taken care of women's childbirth with their hands.[67] Twentieth-century modern health reforms challenged the traditional knowledge structure of scholar-physicians. At the same time, it launched even more vehement attacks on ritual healers.[68]

Second, from popular culture to imperial law, female sexuality and reproduction were tightly connected with female chastity. Even though plenty of "illicit sex" and widow remarriage occurred among ordinary people, late imperial law upheld the elite ideal of female chastity, and many young maidens and widows voluntarily pursued this ideal.[69] By the twentieth century, the old cult of female chastity had lost its currency. Nevertheless, the purity of the female body continued to gain symbolic meanings for Chinese nationalism, and the CCP often aligned sexual morality with female chastity to boost the Party-state's own legitimacy.[70] In rural Shaanbei, the relative social tolerance of widow remarriage coexisted with systematic discrimination against the practice in ritual life. It posed no challenge to the general patriarchal claim on women's reproductive bodies.[71] Patriarchy still ruled in local and national politics during the Yan'an period.

The persistent power of the traditional gender order is reflected in the CCP's indictment of Yang's crime. For anyone who read or listened to Mu's account, female sexuality was evident in the ritual torture, from Bai's naked body to the focus on her genitals. By rejecting Yang's and the rural people's own ritual logic, Mu holds Yang's violence as nothing but sexual assault and a serious transgression of Bai's chastity. Yet, we hear no protest from either the woman herself nor indeed from the husband's family, the patriarchal authority over her body and sexuality. She died with a tattered and tainted body, and her husband's family went along with the shaman's malicious moves to the point of bankrupting itself. By Mu's logic, traditional family patriarchy was powerless to confront the shaman's highly sexualized ritual violence. Only the Party-state could redress the moral wrongs done to the woman. The public trial against Yang ushered in the CCP as the new patriarchal power in rural society.

Mu later supplements his April attack on Yang's sexual predation with the June report that parallels Bai Conghai's confession. Recall the twenty kinds of shamanic ritual service that Mu lists as "scams" in this report. Most of the scams on the list target a shaman's critical function to sustain fertility and children's health in rural Shaanbei. In local rural customs, it was usual for families to make a shaman the "adoptive father" of their children. In exchange for the shaman's protection, the families would offer him a pair of shoes once every three years until the children turned twelve; that is, until they had passed the age most susceptible to premature death.[72] Families routinely hired shamans to make "life-extension strings" (*xuming sheng* 續命繩), a cotton collar that strung several copper coins together for children to wear

around their necks. Some relied on a shaman's charm to destroy the "Curse of Nine-Daughters" (*jiunüsha* 九女煞) in order to further their prospects of producing male heirs. Shamans also battled "fast runners" (*jijiaozi* 急腳子), wicked women who specialized in snatching children's souls for the underworld.[73] By condemning the shamans' sexual violence along with these practices, the CCP propaganda rendered a shaman's ritual role as something that stifled rather than facilitated fertility.

We should also note that Mu portrays Yang as a sexual pervert who violently molested his female victim but never attempted penetration. Of course, Yang could not have attempted penetration under watchful eyes in a ritual setting. Still, it is significant that Mu chose to spill so much ink on Yang's sexual violations but did not accuse Yang as a sexual penetrator, especially given that in Chinese oral and literary traditions, shamans are notoriously capable of sexual intercourse with capricious spirits.[74] In fact, the Yan'an campaign largely departed from traditional elite diatribe against shamans' illicit sexual potency, for none of the propaganda stories in the *Liberation Daily* portrays shamans as aggressive sexual penetrators.[75] As historian Matthew Sommer demonstrates in relation to Qing legal practices, the "stereotypical act of penetration" marks the single most crucial factor to uphold patriarchal authority. Extramarital penetration of a female body violated the patriarchal ownership of the female body and challenged the imperial social and political order that the cult of chastity embodied.[76] Sparing Yang his penetrative power, the propaganda echoes the late imperial political mentality. It presents shamans as a malicious threat *without a phallus*, and as such, the violence they performed on the female body effected their own emasculation. In other words, shamans were evil yet impotent to assume patriarchal dominance in rural life. This perception of impotence is also reflected in the rather lenient court verdict on Yang's murder charge, which we will discuss in the next chapter. Such leniency left room for the CCP to rehabilitate the shaman's true masculinity through the glory of labor.

The emasculation of shamans occurred in tandem with the absence of female shamans in campaign rhetoric. Ethnographic work in present-day Shaanbei finds both male and female shamans.[77] Female shamans today, in Shaanbei and elsewhere, perform ritual services through chanting, burning incense, and giving away charms and pills, but they rarely rely on martial actions such as those described by Bai Conghai and attributed to Yang Hanzhu.[78] We do not know if this was the case back in the 1940s nor, if it was, whether the lack of such martial practice spared them from becoming targets of the campaign. What we do know is that female shamans were seldom mentioned in the Yan'an campaign

propaganda. Where they did occasionally surface, they were presented as victims rather than enablers of ritual violence. In Mu's report, for example, two female shamans claim that they were originally patients of male shamans, who forced them to drink alcohol and beat them during healing sessions. Drunk and unable to bear the physical torture, the women succumbed to the ritual power of the men and subsequently became shamans themselves.[79] Such claims were likely the consequence of female shamans' strategy of presenting themselves as victims to survive the campaign. Nevertheless, the Party newspaper endorsed and publicized them. Being female meant that they lacked the threat of male penetrative potential and had no agency to assert ritual authority of their own.[80] Like Woman Bai, who died a violent death, female shamans too needed to be saved from the evils of male shamans.

The campaign's gendered narrative reflects how the propaganda constructed the Party-state's hegemonic power against its wartime enemies. In the summer of 1944, journalist Gunther Stein observed at Yan'an that the CCP's mass mobilization focused on "only two enemies: the Japanese invaders and their own age old political and social backwardness."[81] As a masculine enemy other, shamans inflicted pain on the female reproductive body, and by extension, the feminized national body. They stood for China's "social backwardness" that needed to be transformed through coercion and education. In contrast, the Japanese invaders appeared in Chinese propaganda as hypersexualized devils who savagely raped and massacred Chinese women in the national theater of war; as such, they threatened the survival of the Chinese nation and needed to be destroyed.[82] Waging the anti-shaman campaign amid an all-out resistance war, Party propaganda constructed a hierarchy of masculinities for the enemy other. Both at home and on the front line, tattered images of the female body called for hypermasculine leadership to save the women and the nation. The imperial cult of female chastity thus did not die out. It simply resurfaced in a different guise.

By pairing "fact-based" stories with Party policy–oriented editorials and reports, the *Liberation Daily* assumed an authority of knowledge of shamanic practices and developed a highly gendered polemic for the CCP's fight against rural backwardness. Yet the Party's proclaimed expert knowledge betrayed its utilitarian views of shamans, and its sensational uses of the female body drew on traditional conceptions of female sexuality and patriarchal power.

Such gender polemics were designed to emasculate shamans, silence the traditional patriarchal authorities in families and village communities, and relegate rural women to the position of silent victims of ritual violence. As we will see in Chapter 4, it would take the combined power of the Party and science to deliver the promise of family fertility and reproductive health to the rural people.

This gendered rhetoric also indicates the ambiguous status of shamans in Communist state-building programs during the anti-Japanese war. While campaign rhetoric condemned the shamanic healing practices as a "murderous businesses," the campaign *did not* target shamans as murderers deserving to die. Rather, they were in a category that separated them from the most evil: Japanese invaders, traitors, spies, and counterrevolutionaries. As long as the shamans gave up their old selves, the Party-state would reform them into new men. We will see the new life waiting for them in the next chapter.

3

From Loafers to Labor Heroes

The anti-shaman campaign captured a historic moment in which the nascent Party-state prioritized rural development for wartime survival and postwar legitimacy. The immediate goal was to integrate parasitic shamans into the larger production force. This chapter moves on from the Party's campaign rhetoric, covered in the last chapter, to the campaign methods, which were defined by Mao's mass line politics to rehabilitate shamans. Section 1 discusses how Party agents deployed the mass line principle through public trials and mass meetings where shamans made confessions. Section 2 studies how local grassroots officials confronted shamans and their ritual power in real-life situations. Section 3 examines how the CCP promoted a "new labor perspective" to remake contrite shamans into "new men." Overall, the campaign represented one of the CCP's first efforts to extend the newly developed intra-Party Rectification mechanisms into the struggle against "degenerate" members of rural society. Nonetheless, traditional religion and ritual also shaped the actual operation of the mass line politics. For the purpose of establishing its hegemonic authority, the CCP navigated between the old and the new in order to effect moral and affective changes in rural society.

1. Mass Line Politics in Action

The Public Trial

The highly publicized trial of the shaman Yang Hanzhu discussed in the previous chapter illustrates mass line politics in action. The rural populace were no strangers to public spectacles of punishment, since these scenes not only happened in real life but were frequently reenacted in religious rituals, folk stories, and opera performances.[1] The CCP's public trials weaved the familiar ritual format into established Communist practices. The Soviet Bolsheviks emphasized heavy media coverage of show trials designed to educate the public against class enemies and political rivals.[2] In the 1920s and 1930s, the

CCP frequently organized mass rallies and public trials to mobilize peasants against landlords. These public spectacles aggressively pursued retaliation and retribution and often resulted in physical violence and the brutal execution of the alleged class enemies. As historian Klaus Mühlhahn succinctly notes, public trials incited public fury, and public fury justified "democratic terror," meaning terror imposed on political enemies in the name of the masses.[3]

The CCP at Yan'an fully recognized the propaganda value of public trials. It set such trials apart from the regular legal system and reserved them for the "most heinous crimes" involving highly destructive traitors, rebels, and, in one case, a Red Army officer whose crime of passion greatly endangered the CCP's public image.[4] Like the Soviet show trials, the CCP's public trials aimed to achieve an educational effect on the populace.[5] They would be staged in an open field, a jury would be formed with representatives from local government, and thousands of local people would be gathered. The trials usually ended with death sentences by execution, and the news would be widely disseminated in the Border Region.[6]

Yang's trial was held in this manner and received the same publicity, but it differed from the general pattern of public trials outlined here. Rather than instigating class hatred and mob violence, as was common in the early peasant movement, the CCP court and newspaper presented Yang's trial as a ritual of deterrence and education. In this regard, the CCP's legal practices concurred with late imperial law, which conceived public shaming as a means to appease victims on the one hand, and prompt an offender's "self-renewal" on the other.[7] Thus the *Liberation Daily* reported that Party agents had intervened at the height of the public anger by exercising legal prudence. Instead of the death sentence "demanded by the masses," the court had sentenced Yang to serve five years in prison for manslaughter. The newspaper pronounced the campaign goal accomplished: the masses were educated to denounce ghosts and spirits, to believe in the Party and in science, and to become more aware of hygiene standards.[8] In this way the trial brought together sensational narratives, judicial actions, heightened emotions, and the actual site of punishment into one public spectacle, which established the Party-state as the supreme source of moral and legal justice.

The final verdict suggests the Party's deliberate show of both benevolence and acquiescence toward local traditions. The CCP government favored rehabilitation over punishment on nonpolitical crimes, but still, the five-year term seemed too lenient to match the heinous murder charge in

the official indictment, let alone the grandiosity of the public trial. According to the Border Region's legal code, involuntary manslaughter, which seems to fit the Yang case, would result in jail time of up to ten years. Unlawful physical assaults that caused injury and harm but not death could still result in imprisonment for up to seven years.[9] In light of these legal statutes, the court granted Yang a share of benevolence disproportional to his alleged crimes.[10] After Yang's trial, the Border Region's high court went even further by instructing county courts that all ritual masters whose "superstitious" healing resulted in "involuntary manslaughter" should only be sentenced to three years in prison.[11] Such leniency was meant to rehabilitate shamans instead of indicting them all as murderers.

Yang's punishment contrasted with what two other shamans received when they were tried, not as shamans but for other crimes, in the 1940s. In one case, a certain Wang Zhenglin 王正林 was charged with conspiring with his mistress to have her husband murdered. The Yan'an county court sentenced him to death, and the woman to a ten-year prison term. In another case, Liu Jubao 劉聚保 was charged with having accidently killed his neighbor during a family feud over common property. Liu originally received a death sentence at the lower court, but after an appeal to the high court, this was reduced to a six-year sentence. There were multiple reasons behind this sentence reduction: the Liu family had already paid a huge sum to compensate the victim's family, to the point of bankruptcy; the dead man's family also resorted to collective violence during the feud; and several grassroots officials mishandled the felonies.[12] Yang's alleged crime seems to lie somewhere between these two cases: he did not kill with intent like Wang, but he took more lives in more unforgiving circumstances than Liu. Even so, Yang's punishment was more lenient than either of the other two cases. It seems that the CCP conceived a shaman's "ritual murder" differently from regular homicide cases.

Away from the campaign center in Yan'an, the CCP court showed more leniency toward ritual healers. In April 1944, around the same time as Yang's trial in Yan'an City, a *yinyang* master was brought to the Yanchuan 延川 county court, eighty kilometers northeast of Yan'an, on a similar charge but without the sensational publicity. Evidently, this *yinyang* master operated as a ritual healer, for the county government charged him with causing the death of a sick woman by beating at her stomach with a "hot cooking knife." The victim's family, however, requested a pardon for him, so the healer was only detained for four days, taken to a local market to show repentance, and then

released.[13] Compared to this healer, Yang just happened to practice his trade at the wrong time in the wrong location, when the CCP needed to produce a highly visible target worthy of a public trial in support of the anti-shaman campaign.

While the public trial worked as a stick, the CCP also waved a carrot. The request to pardon the *yinyang* master by the victim's family recalls the popular saying that shaman Bai Conghai cited in his confession: "Gods only cure illnesses but don't extend lives." The saying reflected a social consensus that, regardless of a folk healer's success or failure, village people relied on, rather than blamed, him for curative treatment. This local reality seeped into the officially choreographed deliberation process of Yang's trial. In showcasing the democratic nature of the CCP legal system, Chief Justice Lei Jingtian informed journalist Gunther Stein that a friend of Yang's was included in his defense counsel, and that "most of the people in the little hamlet at first did not blame the wizard [shaman]."[14] Yang's jury comprised grassroots cadres and local activists, most of whom likely had only moderate or low levels of literacy. The extent to which the defense counsel and the jury were able to sway the verdict can never be known. The lenient verdict, however, suggests that the Party might still have had to consider what ritual healing meant in actual rural traditions. In fact, Yang was later found to have become an earnest worker spinning cotton yarns while serving his jail time, and he pledged to "make good as a farmer" upon his early release.[15] As long as Yang was put on public trial, the main purpose of the propaganda had already been accomplished.

Mass Confessions

Having set up a punitive model with Yang's public trial, the Party went on to use the Rectification Movement as a model to educate the shaman population at large. Like the Soviet Bolsheviks, the CCP saw the Party as the vanguard to remold human minds for wholesale social transformation. The Rectification Movement created a distinctive mechanism for thought reform. It consisted of several stages of inner-Party campaigns involving carefully planned procedures of "self-reform." Each stage started with public lectures delivered by Mao or other Party leaders. Party members and rank-and-file cadres would then study the lectures, followed by rounds of criticism and self-criticism in small-group sessions and mass meetings. Every

participant had to examine one's inner thoughts and write confessions about any wrongs in one's personal and family history. All were encouraged to submit secret allegations against others or to make public denouncements. These campaign methods created significant psychological fear and peer pressure on the participants.[16] The Party posed itself "as a benevolent father" in this process, and many cadres recognized the Party as such out of the fear and anxiety caused by the confessions.[17]

The anti-shaman campaign shared the same purpose in seeking to elevate the Party-state as a benevolent patriarchal authority. In doing so, the Party applied the intra-Party operational principles of the Rectification Movement to a different social group—the rural masses with little or no education. What we see in Bai Conglai's June 1944 confession indicates a much larger operation of mass meetings for the staging of confessions.[18] By November 1944, the government even called for a "shaman confession campaign" to increase the pace of the wider anti-shaman movement.[19]

The most publicized instance of shaman mass confessions was a three-day meeting held by the Yan'an County government on July 14–16, 1944. Preparations for the meeting involved several steps. First, government workers conducted a preliminary investigation of shamans in a manner similar to those used in the "cadre examination" process of the Rectification Movement. They went into villages to identify and collect information about shamans. They then singled out the most "obedient and honest" shamans as their first targets for reeducation. Next, under the influence of these initial educational efforts, the well-behaved shamans became the first ones to make confessions. Although most shamans were not literate enough to read and write, the rationale of criticism and self-criticism remained the same, and Bai's confession very likely served as a model. The county government then led the contrite shamans on a tour for the purpose of educating other shamans and villagers. The shamans were encouraged not only to make confessions about themselves, but also to expose other shamans—a replication of the Rectification Movement process.[20]

Only after they had secured the participation of a number of contrite shamans did the Party workers launch the three-day meeting. On July 14, the county government summoned a total of fifty-nine shamans to attend. The meeting opened and ended with public speeches by Border Region and county officials, who exhorted the shamans to denounce all gods and spirits, abandon their old selves, and become productive citizens. The speeches were followed by a new round of additional reeducation,

during which Party workers first conducted one-to-one educational sessions with each shaman, then grouped them into small study sessions, and finally brought them into mass meetings of criticism and self-criticism. "Shamans know shamans the best," the newspaper claimed, so the participating shamans not only confessed their own crimes but also "competed" in informing on others.[21] In the end, the most "progressive" shaman, a man named Zhao Shixian 趙世賢, led eight shamans from his district to make a pledge:

> We will participate in production labor. We will not be shamans anymore. We will catch any [practicing] shaman as soon as we see one. Should any of us resume the practice, he will pay a fine of three pigs and five years' labor service.
>
> 我們參加生產, 不當巫神. 見巫神就抓, 誰要再犯, 願罰三口豬, 五年勞役.[22]

Other shamans followed suit and offered names of more than eighty fellow practitioners who had managed to avoid the meeting. The meeting concluded with an anti-shaman pact and a public letter presumably signed by all fifty-nine attending shamans. The pact reads:

> We make this compact: we will never practice the shaman profession.
> Invoking and sending off spirits; hacking and slashing demons: with these we deceived people.
> We will practice good *hygiene* and do away with *superstition*.
> We must rectify ourselves from all the bad habits and addictions.
> We will participate in production and take good care of our households.
> We *will supervise each other and educate others*.
> Should we violate this compact, we deserve to be punished.
>
> 我們約定, 再不務神.
> 遣送斬剁, 都是騙人.
> 講求衛生, 破除迷信.
> 各種嗜好, 都要改正.
> 參加生產, 鬧好家務.
> 互相監督, 教育別人.
> 違犯此約, 甘受處分.[23]

The colloquial style and the roughly rhyming verses here give an impression that the shamans had voluntarily produced the pledge and the pact of their own accord. Yet Party agents must have been behind it: the pact contains a number of terms (italicized above) that would have been unfamiliar to rural folks; it was sufficiently well crafted that with just seven short verses, it hits all the keynotes in Lu Dingyi's anti-shaman editorial. If the public trial sent Yang to jail, mass confessions such as this ended with pledges and pacts that reintegrated recalcitrant shamans into rural society.

The political rituals of group self-criticism and confession were carefully designed mechanisms of ideological control. Unlike the Soviet Bolsheviks, who kept this kind of ritual inside the party and aimed only at the political elite, the CCP extended them to all cadres, students, and intellectuals during the Rectification Movement.[24] By the time of the Yan'an campaigns against loafers in 1943 and against shamans in 1944, the Party had begun to utilize these mechanisms within village organizations. What was in Bolshevik Russia a political ritual reserved for the elite, in Yan'an became a mass line exercise.

Beneath the surface of mass line innovations, the Party appropriated traditional practices to extend its campaigns into rural society. The whole process of listening to lectures, examining oneself and others, and making pacts could be found in the preexisting village practice of "community compacts" (*xiangyue* 鄉約). The very first community compact was supposedly created in Lantian 藍田, Shaanxi Province, by the Neo-Confucian scholar-official Lü Dajun 呂大鈞 (1029–1080). The system became widespread during the Ming (1368–1644) and the Qing (1644–1911) dynasties and operated as a key component of village governance.[25] The compact was usually set up by community or lineage leaders with the purpose of disseminating Confucian moral precepts across village communities and maintaining "the rule of ritual" under the leadership of the local gentry elite. The system also served to settle community disputes and supervise judicial oath-making.[26]

Although they may not have followed the exact Ming-Qing format, community compacts operated for both moral leadership and local defense in Shaanbei and remained in place during the 1940s. Local people used the term *xiangyue*, or community compact, to refer to the system as well as to the community or lineage leader. The CCP government accepted this system as containing some "quasi-democratic" elements useful for rural development.[27] It implemented a similar system of "village pacts" (*cunmin gongyue* 村民公約) in each community, promoting the moral cohesion of old families

and new immigrants as well as the Party's educational and economic development projects.[28] The historical and contemporary precedents of community compacts thus provided a backdrop for the Communist reform of shamans.

Confession and self-criticism were also familiar elements in Chinese religious traditions. The CCP's self-criticism sessions resembled the self-examination routines that had been undertaken between masters and their disciples in Confucian academies since the late Ming period. The pledge to "give up evil and return to good" was a stock phrase in Confucian moral thinking.[29] Confessing one's sins was a common practice in Daoist ritual healing, Buddhist monastic disciplines, and popular religious rituals. Ritual masters, monks and nuns, and laypeople often repented their sins in front of divine entities, took oaths to rectify their deviant behavior, and thereby regained a new self, physically, spiritually, or morally.[30] As discussed in Chapter 2, Daoist and shamanic rituals of exorcism were modeled after imperial-era judicial procedures to extract confessions from illness-causing demons. Recall Bai Conghai, who admitted to surrendering the three-pronged broadsword after having witnessed Yang's trial. Bai's surrender suggests how shamans may have used their own ritual logic to approach the CCP's confessional process: as ritual masters who themselves specialized in forcing demonic confessions, the shamans now had to relinquish their own ritual powers by making confessions amid public spectacles. Party workers may have found it easier to draw on existing traditional penitential language to allow the shamans and their fellow villagers to make sense of this new scenario.

In addition to being part of shamanic practice, making confessions, taking oaths, and reaching contractual agreements were part and parcel of traditional legal culture. The late imperial judicial system stipulated that a magistrate could only close a case after he had successfully extracted a confession from the accused. The confessions served to "establish an objective truth," indicating that the accused had submitted himself/herself to state authority, repented of the crime, and therefore could be rehabilitated.[31] According to Paul Katz's seminal study on religion and Chinese legal culture, people took oaths to pledge allegiance, settle conflicts, express their commitment, or prove their innocence. Ritual specialists routinely invoked gods and spirits to witness and supervise such oath-taking ceremonies, some of which involved the trials of flesh similar to those in the shamans' exorcistic rituals, such as "pulling objects out of boiling oil" or "holding (or

walking) on red-hot iron objects." These oath-taking rites were never part of *official* legal procedures in either imperial or modern times, but they were widely practiced throughout the Chinese-speaking world.[32] As reflected by the shamans' pledge published in the *Liberation Daily*, they were part of the knowledge structure in Shaanbei.

Old cultural practices, rather than CCP laws, explained the penalties the reformed shamans acknowledged in their pledge. Under Soviet influence, the Border Region's high court adopted a general policy to enforce criminal punishment through forced labor and to exclude fines paid in cash or in kind.[33] Even if the shamans were unaware of the high court's penal code, they certainly must have known, through study sessions and lectures, the five-year sentence that Yang had received. If any further reinforcement were needed, the penalty of five years of labor service was included in the pledge. Nonetheless, the pledge also includes an added penalty fine of three pigs—nowhere in the official penal code can one find a clause requiring payment of a fine in kind.[34] This discrepancy reveals the way in which the shamans' pledge was aligned with the kind of payment shamans usually received for their services and with what was stipulated in contracts and agreements that had long been used outside of the official legal system in Chinese rural society.[35] Although the terms of the pledge did not conform to current law, the CCP publicized it anyway because the familiar terms enabled the Party to reach the rural population with a basic message: shamans were swindlers who had now submitted to Party authority. The mass line campaign thus adopted the familiar language of village life to subdue the ritual power of the shamans.

2. Grassroots Officials and Ritual Exorcism

Traditional resources served the CCP government not only to give extra weight to the subordination of shamans at mass meetings but also to extol the grassroots officials involved in everyday campaigns. We will see more on how CCP cadres battled ghosts and shamans in the old fashion of exorcists in Chapter 5. Suffice it to say here that a key word in Communist thought reforms, *jiaoyu* 教育 (education), strongly resonated with *jiaohua* 教化 (to transform through education), a time-honored duty of imperial officials to reform the people with Confucian moral values.[36] The Rectification Movement reinforced the CCP belief that education and persuasion could

convert degenerate members of society, including shamans, from potential "counterrevolutionary tools" to useful laborers in the revolutionary camp.[37]

CCP grassroots officials undertook this educational task on the ground. One model official in this effort was Yin Denggao 尹登高, the Liulin 柳林 District Chief of Yan'an County.[38] An article in the *Liberation Daily* published on May 28, 1944 (i.e., in the month between the two pairings of articles we have explored thus far), with the title "A Great Educator, District Chief Yin Turns Shamans into Good Laborers," gives a glowing account of Yin's dealings with shamans. Upon hearing that a mass ritual gathering of shamans had attracted large crowds, Yin avoided a direct clash with the shamans under the pretext of "not upsetting the masses." Instead, he sent two undercover cadres to investigate the meeting. They discovered that it was a purported "martial contest" between two "blood-stench demons" (*xiexinggui* 血腥鬼) and two "ritual masters," who "wantonly bluffed, cursed, danced, and punched" until nightfall. The contest must have been a fierce exorcistic battle in the eyes of the local people, who commonly believed in the "blood-stench demon" as a cause of women's blood-related illnesses (see Chapter 5). With this information in hand, Yin invited the shamans to his office, set up an altar *for* them, and urged them to do a "show and tell" in front of a large crowd. From the shamans' perspective, of course the spirits would not come, because the ritual setting was not properly set up on the shamans' terms (recall Bai's confession on a shaman's ritual). With their divine insight, the shamans might have also argued that the spirits must have known that Yin's altar was a trap. Nevertheless, the *Liberation Daily* praised Yin's clever design to expose the shamans' fraud and claimed that the crowd was effectively educated as a result.[39]

Yin, we are told, had used a similar strategy on another occasion, when an old man under his jurisdiction pressed charges against a shaman for the death of both his grandson and his ox. Yin had asked, "Do you want to sue the man or the spirit? If you want to sue the man, I will interrogate the man; if you want to sue the spirit, I will interrogate the spirit."[40] Since the shaman claimed that the spirit had done everything, good and bad, Yin requested that the shaman prove his innocence by calling forth the spirit, in Yin's presence and with a crowd watching. When the spirit failed to appear, the shaman was forced to repent. Yin then announced his verdict: the shaman's ritual tools would be confiscated, and the shaman had to make a public confession, pledge not to practice again, and serve a ten-day labor penalty. But Yin exonerated the shaman from the murder charges. The double deaths, he

decided, were caused respectively by the unhygienic habits of the old man's family and a cattle plague. The article then pivots back to the theme of education and transformation: the shaman rededicated himself to farming, the villagers vowed not to hire shamans again, and the village was transformed into a "model village of hygiene."[41]

Yin's handling of the shamans was significantly different from the public trial against Yang. First, the reports on Yin's actions reflected the "open court" practices that the CCP had invented for civil and minor criminal lawsuits during the Yan'an period. To carry out the mass line in legal practices, local officials usually went out of the courtroom to hold trials on a "community public site" so that they could both listen to the rural masses as well as educate them about legal matters.[42] Yin was not a judge—his office at the district level was below the lower court. Nevertheless, in holding an open court in front of a watching crowd, Yin's behavior was reminiscent of imperial officials who would exercise both administrative and judicial power from their offices.[43]

Second, compared with the heavy focus on torture and murder in the report on Yang's trial, the article on Yin only mentions the death of the old man's grandson in one sentence, and has Yin easily dismissing the murder charge to the satisfaction of both the old man and the shaman. The two verdicts and their representation in the Party newspaper reveal the two sides of the anti-shaman campaign. Mu's account of Yang's public trial, along with Lu's editorial, was splashed on the front page of the April issue to define the campaign's hyperbolic rhetoric of shaman healers as killers. In contrast, the article on Yin's open court trials was placed on the inside page of the newspaper a month later. Yin's story, along with three other stories on the same page, taught readers how to fight shamans in real-life situations.[44] While Yang's trial operated as the Party's iron fist, Yin's verdicts illustrate local officials' velvet gloves.

Beneath the laudatory tone of the account on Yin, we get a glimpse of how grassroots CCP officials strategically used their authority to tackle a shaman's ritual power. In both cases, Yin confronted the shamans with their own cultural logic: he demarcated his office and the normal locus of the shamans' exorcism as two competing ritual arenas. He avoided venturing into the shamans' territory, in part to concede the popular appeal of their ritual spectacle. Instead, Yin forced the shamans' ritual procedure to be rendered in *his* office. He succeeded in overpowering both the shamans and their gods through a public spectacle that took place in his own judicial sphere. Consciously or not, Yin followed in the footsteps of numerous imperial

officials who shrewdly deployed the power of the official seal and other militant theatrics.[45] He may not have held the same ritual and cosmological views as his imperial predecessors, but he exploited the same format of official exorcism to educate the shamans and the people in a way that they could relate to and might be persuaded by.

3. A New Labor Perspective

To Be a Good Sufferer

Public trials, confession meetings, and surrenders to officials only marked the beginning of the transformation sought regarding targeted shamans. The Party's goal was to bring them into the underfilled labor force. By local standards, however, physical labor meant arduous battles against harsh natural conditions. Local people considered farming a poor man's job, and the local term for a farmhand was *shoukuren* 受苦人, or "the one who suffers."[46] To survive, able-bodied men resorted to other forms of strenuous labor, such as mining, raising livestock, or transporting merchandise across the region's tough terrain.[47] Many tried hard to avoid physical labor altogether by joining bandits or loafing about. This partly explains why, as Bai Conghai's confession indicates, shamans who could earn a living without farming were admired in local society.

Most shamans, however, could not sustain a livelihood by practicing the shaman trade alone. Among the fifty-nine shamans who attended the three-day confession meeting discussed above, only three were full-time shamans, while twenty-three were part-time farmers. The remaining thirty-three, according to a *Liberation Daily* article published on July 21, "do not make a living out of the shaman trade," suggesting that they fell into the official category of "loafers," who lived by stealing, gambling, smoking opium, doing illegal business, or, simply "shaman-ing" around.[48] According to CCP statistics, the Border Region had anywhere between 30,000 and 70,000 officially labeled loafers out of a total population of 1,400,000 in 1937. By early 1943, the government had reduced the number of designated loafers to 9,554, and considered this still a sizable population who preferred to loaf about rather than "suffer."[49]

For both pragmatic and ideological purposes, the Party sought to redefine labor against the local frame of mind. The wartime demands for productivity

and tax revenue made it imperative to bring all able-bodied men and women into the labor force. Ideologically, the Party had developed the Marxist ideology since the early twentieth century. It highlighted the sacred value of physical labor and expanded the scope of laborers beyond urban proletariats to include *all* who labored with physical strength.[50] Under Soviet influence, the CCP leaders regarded labor as a crucial element in educational and penal systems in its ability to transform people into socialist citizens.[51] In an April 1943 editorial by the leading Party philosopher Ai Siqi 艾思齊 (1910–1966), the *Liberation Daily* called for the establishment of a "new labor perspective." It glorified labor as a fundamental characteristic of Mao's New Democratic Society, in which the "laboring masses" became masters of their own fate.[52] Party media now called rural folks who committed themselves to productive work *hao shoukuren* 好受苦人, or "good sufferers."[53] By promoting this new perspective in which workers are encouraged to emulate model "labor heroes," the Party sought to change popular attitudes toward physical labor from a matter of "suffering" to one of "glory."[54]

Labor heroes and heroines became new gender ideals in the Border Region. For the farming men, the standout hero was Wu Manyou 吳滿有 (1893–1959), who by 1942 had risen from a destitute famine refugee to a wealthy peasant. The Party launched consistent campaigns to "emulate Wu Manyou," who provided a model for "the direction for all peasants in the entire Border Region."[55] When asked about the secret of his success, Wu was reported to have said: "I have no secret *but to work*."[56] Wu's statement purposely set him apart from the rich in the old society: Wu had earned his wealth through hard work, while the ruling class despised labor and exploited the laboring classes to get rich. Labor now became a key to building individual dignity, family prosperity, social recognition, and ensuring the well-being of the Party-state.

While upholding Wu as a model for farming men, the CCP mobilized rural women by naming labor heroines from early 1943.[57] The Party celebrated some labor heroines who "farmed like men," bringing to the fore women's unrecognized contribution to agricultural production.[58] Meanwhile, Party leaders believed that, compared to farming, textile work offered a more pragmatic option for women to gain economic independence at home while still attending to other household chores. The CCP's call for the glory of labor therefore departed little from traditional conceptions of the gendered labor division: men work in the field and factories, and women spin, weave, and raise children and livestock. This gender division of labor would serve the

wartime demands for food and clothing.[59] It forged the prosperous picture of a "new form of family life" that appealed to the rural populace.[60]

Male shamans, who had been singled out as chief campaign targets, appeared to obstruct both the Border Region's production demands and this new form of family life. In contrast to Wu Manyou, shamans were called "rats" who stole the fruits of people's labor and drained their resources.[61] Reporting on the mass confession meeting on July 14, a *Liberation Daily* article published on August 11 quantified the financial damage of shamans' ritual practices in the following terms:

1) What is the total waste in our county?
   Total number of shamans: 161.
   Total performances of "dancing the spirit" by each shaman each year: 36.
   Total cost each time to the hosting family: 3,800 yuan.
   Total cost of entertaining and accommodating guests: 2,000 yuan.
   Total annual cost to the county as a whole: 33,618,600 yuan.
2) [The cost of performing the community exorcist ritual of] Settling the Village:
   Xinmaotai 新峁台 village hired the shaman Gao Zhifu 高治富 to "settle the village" one time. The total cost was 90,000 yuan.
   Shaman Cheng Xiang 程項 feigned a "haunting ghost" by himself. People offered him 110,000 yuan to "settle the village," but he asked for 300,000 yuan.
3) How many people have they [the shamans] killed?
   The fifty-nine shamans present at the mass meeting stated themselves: they killed 278 people in total. For 161 shamans, how many people would they have killed in total?
4) If every shaman in Yan [Yan'an] County cultivates ten more *shang* 垧 of land each year, the size of arable land will be increased by 1,620 *shang*. If every *shang* of land produces three *dou* 斗 of fine grain, the annual production of fine grain will be at least 483 *dan* 石 more.[62]

These numbers put in concrete terms how shamans siphoned financial and human resources from village communities. They connected the reform of shamans to farming, particularly to the labor work to open up wastelands and increase productivity.

Emotional Work

The reform of shamans became part of the reform of loafers that the CCP had begun a year earlier, in 1943. The Party created a social environment that subjected loafers to the same Rectification methods mentioned previously, including confessions, criticism and self-criticism, and struggle sessions.[63] Moreover, the Party mobilized emotions.

One emotional ploy utilized by the CCP was to create a sense of moral debt to induce personal transformation. According to the *Liberation Daily*, the government allocated land to all loafers and organized them into groups. Village cadres were required to supervise the loafers' work schedules and provide them loans, grains, and other forms of aid. The loafers were, in turn, expected to respond to this generosity with gratitude. In a different Party newspaper in September 1943, one stubborn loafer was quoted on receiving the aid from the cadres: "Even my mother had never cared so much about me when she was alive. Now I have them [the cadres] as my parents because they have given me a new life and educated me to become a new man."[64] Reported by the *Liberation Daily* in January 1944, another reformed man urged others to change because of Mao's presumed personal attention: "Even the national leader of the Communist Party wishes us to change, and he worries that we loafers would all die of hunger in the next famine year. . . . Work is the solution, let us all work hard!"[65] It was through work that these "parasitic" members of society could repay the benevolence of Mao and the cadres, who personified the Party-state.

Of course, every "personal" statement in the *Liberation Daily* was supposed to speak for the Party. The newspaper deliberately couched these emotionally charged statements of gratitude in the language of family and kinship. The loafers compared the cadres to parents and spoke of Mao as a fatherly figure who displayed specific concern for their well-being. As anthropologist Hans Steinmüller argues, the political significance of the family metaphor harks back to a long Confucian tradition that equates the filiality of sons to their fathers to the loyalty of subjects to their rulers. Filial relations thus operated as the foundation of the cosmological order. The following passage, which Steinmüller quotes from the timeless Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 孝經), places the loafers' expressions into perspective:

> As they serve their father, so they serve their mothers, and they love them equally. As they serve their fathers, so they serve their rulers, and

> they reverence them equally. Hence love is what is chiefly rendered to the mother, and reverence is what is chiefly rendered to the ruler, while both of these things are given to the father.[66]

In Confucian terms, the father figure embodies both maternal love and paternal authority: the ruler bestows his benevolence upon the people as the father of the nation.

The vehement attacks on Confucianism since the May Fourth era did not root out the deeply ingrained Confucian order of patriarchy from Chinese culture. Steinmüller points out that the CCP reconfigured the old patriarchal terms of moral debt to frame a new state–family relationship. What distinguished this new relationship from "feudal" loyalty was Mao's mass line politics, characterized by a vernacular (hence more popular) style and more sentimentalized expressions of love.[67] Party officials and cadres had to "Serve the People," a mass line obligation that Mao prescribed in September 1944.[68] Mao himself emerged from the Rectification Movement as not only what scholars call a prophetic "cosmocrat" of the revolution but also a man of the people who had his own fair share of the production quota to meet, sent his son to learn farming with a labor hero, and enjoyed homemade liquor at a local worker's house.[69] Mao was both venerated and loved, more so than the faraway emperor or stern father in traditional terms. A new affective exchange was thus forged in the CCP ideology of governance: the people were expected to express gratitude to the service of the cadres and to the benevolence of the leader.[70] The reform of loafers helped create the desired emotional effect through the creation of moral debts. Just like Party cadres who survived their confessions in the Rectification Movement, the thought reform subordinated the loafers to the patriarchal authority of Mao and the Party-state.

Other than using moral debts to evoke gratitude, the Party resorted to public shaming to produce emotional compliance. The government publicly labeled loafers to make them objects of public ridicule, to the extent that almost every village and town had ditties deriding loafers.[71] At some public rallies, Party organizers had labor heroes and heroines sit center stage, wearing red silk flowers on their chests, with loafers standing either side, wearing the marks of public humiliation: a white armband and a wooden plaque around their necks.[72] Such public shaming was reportedly very effective, for several loafers expressed that the meetings were the decisive moment for them to turn over a new leaf.[73]

Family members became tools of public shaming. Several loafers were reported to have changed because their wives urged them to work and threatened them with divorce. One loafer "was deeply moved" when his seven-year-old son cried and protested as people called him a loafer and forced him to wear the armband. An old-time loafer reportedly changed after his grandson knelt before him and pleaded with him to change his ways. A father was so angry with his loafer son that he went to the local government and announced that he would cut the son off from his family.[74] The Party deployed the emotional links between family members to effect the desired behavioral change.

Public shaming has been a common feature in punitive cultures around the world. We can easily find historical and contemporary equivalent badges of shame to the white armband and wooden plaque: dunce caps, striped jumpsuits, and, most notoriously, the yellow star that has been used to stigmatize the Jewish people from medieval times to the Nazis.[75] But the universal practice of public shaming is lodged with specific significance in the Chinese context. Historian Brian McKnight demonstrates that, except for cases of death penalty, the Chinese imperial state anticipated the rehabilitation of all convicts through moral "self-renewal." In a rural society where an individual's sense of physical and emotional well-being depended heavily on family and community connections, "the fear of informal sanctions, specifically the loss of reputations, is a more powerful deterrent than is the fear of formal sanctions."[76] In this regard, the armband and wooden plaque generated the same social effect as did judicial tattoos to mark criminals or a sign nailed on the door of a convict's family in the imperial era.[77] Even if a loafer did not care for his own public image, his family and social pressure in general would soon force him to conform.

Labor was the main moral standard used to generate emotions and distinguish loafers from labor heroes. This reflects what psychological studies refer to as "moral emotions," which associate one's senses of guilt, shame, honor, and gratitude to the well-being of one's family, community, or society as a whole. Moral emotions prompt people to take rightful actions, either to reform their own ways or to repay favors received from others.[78] While the Party glorified labor heroes to achieve success in production, public shaming compelled loafers to repent for failing to be a good husband, a loving father, a filial son, or an honorable member of the community. The only way to redeem themselves from that moral guilt was to repent and "become a good laborer (*hao laodong* 好勞動)."[79]

Giving Up the Three-Pronged Broadsword

Following the rhetoric of hero-emulation and emotional repentance, the propaganda developed a standard narrative on reformed shamans. The narrative followed three major themes that political scientist Liu Yu uses to characterize Maoist discourse in later PRC campaigns.[80] The first theme was victimization. Most shamans were identified as poor farmers, who were forced into the "fraudulent trade" by poverty and corrupt government in the old social system. The second theme was redemption. By cutting themselves off from the influence of the old society, shamans could be redeemed from evil. The final theme was emancipation. Under the CCP leadership, the rural poor gained land and property free from exploitation. A shaman could become wealthy if he "gave up the three-pronged broadsword" and devoted himself to farm work.[81] A loafer could become a labor hero.

Labor heroes such as Wu Manyou set new masculine ideals for shamans to emulate. Such was the case of Guo Suiyun 郭遂運, a fifty-five-year-old reformed shaman whose story is recounted in the anti-shaman booklet with the title "Guo Suiyun Gives Up Evil and Returns to Good." Written in (supposedly) Guo's first-person voice, the article says that he was born to an impoverished family in Hengshan 橫山 County, the same place where Wu and many other refugees had come from. Unlike Wu, however, Guo became a shaman at the age of nineteen after he realized that a shaman's half-day ritual paid more than his three years of farm work. He loafed about with a shaman's ill-gotten wealth—until he failed to save his wife's life with his ritual healing. He took up farming again for a landlord and returned to a life of hunger until 1936, when the CCP arrived and redistributed land to the poor.[82]

From here, the newspaper account brings Gao back to Wu's model path. Gao proudly states that after nine years of hard work, both his brother and his son had found wives—great achievements in an area where many young men could not afford marriage.[83] Now with a household of seven, Gao declares that they own more than 100 *shang* of land and grow a great variety of crops and vegetables. He states in a tone of gratitude:

> In the past we had nothing to eat. Now we eat glutinous millet, buckwheat, and fried oat noodles every day. We raise our own sheep and eat meat often. We also have two fat pigs and hire two long-term farmhands. All four seasons we wear thick and thin cotton and leather, and we have quilts and

> wool blankets at night. It is so comfortable! This is truly more enjoyable than being a loafer.[84]

The great number of livestock and the varieties of crops paint a rosy picture of a happy life for any rural household. Here the Party newspaper has Guo depict a life that exemplifies the Party's two mottos of rural prosperity: "ample clothing and abundant food" (*fengyi zushi* 豐衣足食) and "numerous in people and prosperous in properties" (*rencai liangwang* 人財兩旺). Guo's example was meant to motivate all shamans to redeem themselves through labor and realize their potential as labor heroes.

The CCP's idolization of labor relied more on moral and affective than legal means to reform "nonproducers." In establishing a new labor perspective, the Party asserted moral authority to transform shaman loafers into labor heroes and to bestow grace on them in terms of land distribution, cadre supervision, community aid, and affective bonding.

Shamans were frequent targets of official suppression and elite criticism in the imperial era, but they were attacked then with a different rationale from that of the CCP. The late imperial Confucian elite accused shamanistic claims of spiritual connection as fraudulent because they conceived of themselves as living in the same moral universe as the shamans, and the two relied on different methods and forms to compete over access to the magic of the same unseen world.[85] By contrast, the anti-superstition rhetoric in the twentieth century was built on secular grounds and promoted a linear, progressive, and future-oriented worldview. It left no room for gods, spirits, or any other "supernatural" forces in the social, economic, and political lives of modern citizens. Or so the CCP has claimed ever since.

But the Communist rejection of tradition was not as clean-cut as they claim it to be. To the contrary, traditional religious structures shaped how the Party imparted secular perspectives and carried out the mass line principle. From public trials, confessions, and pacts to official exorcism, model emulation, and affective bonding, CCP campaigns sought not only to subdue shamans but to realign them with the new masculine ideal of labor heroes under the benevolent authority of the Party-state.

The campaign to convert shaman loafers into labor heroes was one of the first CCP experiments in bringing the intra-Party Rectification mechanisms

to bear on the reform of rural degenerates. Many of the practices documented here would finally penetrate into the basic levels of Chinese society after 1949, when the CCP prerogative shifted from winning popular support to consolidating power. In this light, the anti-shaman campaign ushered in the mass line process applied in the CCP's thought reforms for the years to come.

4

Model Doctors and the Wonder of Science

The anti-shaman campaign was an outgrowth of the CCP's broad vision to transform rural backwardness into economic and cultural prosperity, in terms of the two propaganda mottos: "ample clothing and abundant food" and "numerous in people and prosperous in properties." The prospect of rural prosperity, however, was greatly hampered by the Border Region's primitive medical and health conditions. Official statistics reported that, of the thirteen villages in and around Yan'an City, the annual birth rate of 87 per 1,000 population was offset by a high mortality rate of 52 per 1,000 population. While 47 percent of the deaths were caused by infectious disease, unhygienic practices of childbirth left many women with gynecological diseases, and the infant mortality rate ran as high as 60 percent to 80 percent in some villages.[1] The demands for health services reached a new high when an epidemic surged in the spring of 1944.[2] Since Western medicine was little known, and doctors of Chinese medicine were few, shaman healers appeared to be the most popular health resource available to village folks.[3] In order to create rural prosperity, the CCP vowed to replace shaman healing with modern medicine.

In his anti-shaman editorial on April 29, 1944, Lu Dingyi, general editor of the *Liberation Daily*, connected the campaign to the CCP agenda of rural development. The campaign's long-term goal, Lu declared, was to build a public healthcare system down to the village level, and to advance hygienic and sanitary education. This chapter studies two ways in which the campaign carried out this goal. First, Party propaganda promoted a range of model doctors to replace shaman healers (Section 1). Second, the propaganda advocated the wonder of medical science through public exhibitions and temple fairs (Section 2). In both aspects, the Party supported the gendered rhetoric against shamans with the combined power of medical science and the benevolence of the Party-state. This situation again shows how Mao's mass line politics operated in the transition between new Party initiatives and old religious traditions, with both successes and failures.

1. Side-by-Side Campaigns: Fighting Shamans with Medical Science

While relying on a new labor perspective to transform the shamans into good laborers, the Party advocated that doctors wield modern medicine to save the people from charlatans and deliver them a life of prosperity. The day after Lu's editorial on April 29, the *Liberation Daily* published a major article on mass health work by Fu Lianzhang 傅連暲 (1894–1968), then head of the Party Central's Health Department and dean of the Central Hospital. Echoing Lu's editorial, Fu specified doctors of Chinese medicine and shaman healers as two existing forces that the Party's mass health work would encounter in rural society. He required that doctors of Chinese medicine register with the government and join the mass health work and that shamans be denounced and reformed.[4] The anti-shaman campaign was to be waged side by side with a broader public health campaign.

The fight against shamans in the field of modern medicine was not a CCP innovation.[5] Rather, the CCP followed in the GMD's footsteps by valuing Western biomedicine and seeking to "scientize Chinese medicine." It distinguished traditional doctors from ritual healers and developed "scientific" theories for acupuncture, moxibustion, and herbal medicines.[6] The CCP's pursuit of mass health work may have also been influenced by the Rural Reconstruction Movement in the pre-Communist Ding County of northern China in the 1920s. Both took community-based approaches to implement basic sanitary facilities such as wells and latrines in rural communities. Both attempted to establish health clinics, and midwifery, nursing, and other medical training programs at the three tiers of county, township, and village level. The CCP also adopted similar concepts from the Ding County experiment to establish health cooperatives and model villages of hygiene and sanitation.[7]

Despite these common features, wartime conditions and post-Rectification politics took the CCP's social programs onto different paths.[8] Operating under Mao's mass line principle, the CCP now required that all state and military doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and medical facilities make themselves available to the rural population.[9] Yet it did not have enough medical resources to get by. In 1944, the CCP government reported more than two thousand shamans in the Border Region, which contrasted with only, "good and bad altogether," one thousand doctors of Chinese medicine and a mere two hundred doctors of Western medicine.[10] Of this largely male

force of doctors, most who practiced Western medicine came from the army and the state hospitals and clinics, and were called "state doctors" (*gongjia de yisheng* 公家的醫生). All local doctors practiced Chinese medicine; these were fewer in number than shamans but more numerous than state doctors. In light of this situation, general editor Lu Dingyi spelled out a hierarchical order of doctors to fight against shamans: doctors of Western medicine possessed advanced knowledge, and doctors of Chinese medicine were of great number; state doctors would lead, and local doctors would follow.[11] All doctors must strive to "Serve the People."

The severe shortage of Western-style medical resources also forced the CCP to rely more on traditional means. The Party urged the integration of traditional knowledge with Western medical science.[12] In GMD-controlled areas in the 1930s, such integration efforts were criticized as a "mongrel medicine" (*zazhongyi* 雜種醫), or "neither donkey nor horse" (*feilü feima* 非驢非馬).[13] At Yan'an, in contrast, the Party directed a mass movement to "scientize Chinese medicine" and "make Western medicine Chinese."[14] The small number of state doctors led the "scientizing" process. To fully mobilize traditional medical resources, however, the CCP also accorded high political status and public honors to some local doctors.[15] It encouraged (or pressured) local doctors, especially "scholar-doctors" who based their medical expertise on classical medical texts, to share their family-brand herbal medicines and to teach their trade to state doctors.[16] Thus the CCP campaign to promote medical science hinged not just on introducing Western science but also on reinventing traditional Chinese medicine.

Traditional Chinese medicine, however, did not belong to scholar-doctor practitioners alone. Shamans and other folk healers also used herbs, needles, and moxibustion in ritual healing. Other than a few renowned scholar-doctors, the lines between traditional doctors and shaman healers were often blurry. Some grassroots cadres, who might be more grounded in local reality than Party officials, even encouraged individual shamans to learn new medical skills and join local health cooperatives so that they could continue a profession of healing without rituals.[17] But campaign propaganda continued to label shamanic healing as "superstition" that did not belong to "traditional medicine." In this context, the CCP defined "shamans" not as a generic category in Shaanbei's rural life but as a label exclusively reserved for ritual healers to be replaced by doctors of both Western and Chinese medicine.

State Doctors: The Gender of Medical Science

The contrast between doctors and shamans had its historical roots and was often framed in gender terms. Elite writings from imperial times routinely associated doctors with the male-dominated Confucian textual authorities, and linked shamans with men and women on the margins of Chinese society and civilization.[18] But gender distinctions in medicine were not merely a traditional Chinese construction. It was not that much further back in history when Western medical doctors were commonly perceived as men armed with knowledge of science and technology, while women in the medical profession were expected to be nurses or to provide other, less specialized care.[19] Such traditional gendered notions could not have failed to influence CCP efforts in the medical realm.

The CCP followed these general gender perceptions but added a more complex plotline in projecting a hierarchical order of doctors to save young women from shaman healers. Party propaganda portrayed male state doctors as performing healing miracles with extraordinary knowledge and skills. A salient example is that of Wang Zhaoxin 王照新 (1915–1988), honored as a "principal model doctor" by the Border Region government. Wang had joined the revolution in 1936, and in 1944 served as the director of a CCP army medical corps stationed in Dingbian 定邊 County. The *Liberation Daily* contrasted his achievement with the failings of two male folk healers on June 4, 1944. The report assumes the first-person voice of a rural woman, "Ma Chuan's wife," who had suffered from chronic abdominal pain after childbirth. Her husband hired a needle-healer, but the healer fled after having broken the needle halfway into her abdomen. Next, he hired a *yinyang* master, who charged a great sum but failed to remove the pain or the needle. Finally, husband and wife came to the hospital, where the surgical treatment of "miracle-working doctors" (*shenyi* 神醫) were "really efficacious." Wang, the director of the hospital, had greeted Ma Chuan's wife in a blue-cotton uniform with bright smiles. When she woke up after the surgery, her husband walked over to her with the broken needle in his hand: Wang had taken the needle out and relieved her of pain. The woman concludes the story with the exclamation: "I have gained a second life. Director Wang saved my life!"[20]

Director Wang's example established the standard propaganda narrative on state doctors. On September 29, the *Liberation Daily* extolled another state doctor, a "Director Li," who performed surgery on a local woman also suffering from abdominal pain. Her condition had suddenly exacerbated one

day, causing her to collapse to the floor with an ashen face, foaming from the mouth. Her husband ran for help from a shaman. Without recovering her "lost soul," the shaman instead departed with a chicken that he supposedly should have sent to the underworld to recover her soul. The husband then turned to a needle-healer and, exactly as had happened to Ma Chuan's wife, the needle-healer fled after breaking the needle halfway into her abdomen. As the husband debated whether to find another ritual master, the wife's brother informed him that hospital cures could be more "efficacious." At the hospital, Director Li made a dramatic show by allowing a rural crowd to observe the entire procedure:

> The villagers watched nervously as Director Li opened the woman's stomach, took out the broken needle, then dug out the patient's intestines. There [they saw] two bloody lumps that clotted the intestines. Director Li cut out the bloody lumps, put the intestines back into the patient's stomach, and stitched up the opening. . . . The woman's brother took up the two chunks of bloody lumps, saying: "Look, aren't these the illness that has just been cut out? We folks are superstitious and believe in gods. This director, the doctor, is a true living god."[21]

Recall the sensations and spectacles of a shaman's exorcistic ritual described in the article on Yang Hanzhu's trial in Chapter 2. Now a state doctor's surgery is described in equally spectacular terms. Whereas shamans and folk healers had failed, state doctors had succeeded in saving the women's lives. The healed female body serves as testament to the medical miracles of state doctors. The "spontaneous" responses of the local people in these articles provided further "proof" that the Party's promotion of medical science aligned directly with the well-being of everyday people. Exalted as "living gods," CCP state doctors like Li and Wang inspired awe and gratitude on the part of the masses toward the Party-state.

Even though the *Liberation Daily*, as we have noted, generally spared female shamans as campaign targets, childbirth was a female domain in rural Shaanbei, and thus state doctors inevitably had to confront female healers in saving rural women from dying in labor. In one such story, the aforementioned Director Wang arrived at the scene after four "female shamans" had failed to deliver a baby and left the mother's life in danger. In treating a labor dystocia, two of the healers had turned to prayers, and the other two had forcefully torn the baby's legs right off the body and left the head in the womb!

With the mother seemingly dead too, Director Wang arrived. He examined the mother, immediately operated on her, and returned her to life. The husband and the crowd reportedly cried out: "The Communist Party is Great, Chairman Mao is Great, The Eight Route Army is Great, and Director Wang is a living god!"[22] This story did not appear among the *Liberation Daily*'s anti-shaman stories, but a group of artists reenacted it along with the story about "Ma Chuan's wife" in the form of two comic strips in popular raree shows (*la yangpian* 拉洋片): one which promoted the new scientific methods to deliver babies, the other which attacked the evil of shamanic healings.[23] In both cases, male state doctors used medical science to save women's lives.

The CCP propaganda did recognize female state doctors, but in ways different from their male counterparts. Given traditional gender norms, female medical workers had a natural advantage in reaching out to local women and addressing maternal and child health concerns. Two notable heroines were Ruan Xuehua 阮雪華 (1909–?) and Bai Lang 白浪 (1917–2010s?) from the Party Central Press's clinic located at the Clear and Cool Mountain (Qingliangshan 清涼山) in the suburbs of Yan'an City. Ruan studied at a Christian high school and a professional school affiliated with the Women and Children's Hospital in Beiping [Beijing] before she became a full-time nurse at the Beiping Union Medical College Hospital. This career experience was sufficiently impressive for Ruan to become a key medical cadre serving the Party Central after she arrived in Yan'an in 1938, and since 1940 she had overseen the Press Clinic.[24] Serving under her leadership was twenty-five-year-old Bai Lang, who had received basic training at the Border Region's medical school in 1941 and began working at Ruan's clinic in 1942.[25]

In 1944, Ruan and Bai answered the Party's call to open their clinic to the rural masses. Party media reported that in less than five months, the two had treated over nine hundred villagers and provided treatments more than three thousand times. In May 1944, when the residents of a district of Yan'an City established a health cooperative, they invited Ruan and Bai to take charge. On May 25, 1944, local people gathered at the award ceremony in which the Yan'an City government named the two women as "model doctors."[26]

Like the male state doctors, the two women emerged as "miracle" workers who delivered care and compassion on behalf of the Party-state. The people offered them plaques inscribed with phrases such as "cure the sick and save lives" (*zhibing jiuren* 治病救人) and "divine hands and miraculous arts" (*shenshou miaoshu* 神手妙術). The newspaper compared the old and new forms of healing in the voice of a grandmother: "In the past I prayed to gods

for sons and grandsons. . . . Look at now, even the bodhisattva is not as kind as you are!" Others simply called them two living bodhisattvas: "What is the point of believing in ghosts and spirits now?" Four shamans were reported to have gone out of business after the two women took charge of the health cooperative.[27] Using local people's own words, the newspaper portrayed the two doctors as a divine force that expelled shamans and their gods from the local community.

Stories on female doctors such as Ruan and Bai do mention, as just noted, their medical skills, but they tend to focus more on their dedication through bodily sacrifices. The stories tout Ruan's and Bai's extraordinary efforts in trudging through rugged mountainous roads, sometimes in torrential rain, to reach patients in remote locations. The two women embodied the ideal to "sacrificed oneself to save others" beyond medical services: as well as delivering babies, they helped new mothers wash, clean, and feed their babies. They declined food and gifts from the locals, and often gave up their own food to nourish their patients. Following the segregated gender perception we mentioned earlier, female doctors like Ruan and Bai were cast by CCP propaganda as specialized caregivers.

One of the most celebrated contributions of the female doctors was Bai Lang's donation of blood. Folk beliefs held blood as a woman's vital life force, and losing blood as detrimental to her health.[28] Bai, however, defied this tradition after she caught whooping cough from treating sick local children. Believing that the blood from recovered patients was the most efficient cure, Bai was reported to have donated blood more than ten times after she had made her recovery. When an unskilled nurse could not find Bai's vein, Bai encouraged her to make continuous attempts without complaint. She even donated blood during menstruation, which must have profoundly moved local people, for such an action, in popular belief, would double the harm to a woman's health. She, however, took the sacrifice lightly: "According to medical science, there is no danger in doing this. I happen to have this good condition [that my blood can cure], and I just have to save lives without any reservations."[29] It is thus science that empowered her bodily sacrifices.

The propaganda narratives sharply contrasted female doctors with male state doctors in relation to the local women: male state doctors bestowed miracles with medical expertise, and female doctors saved lives with their blood and bodily sacrifices. Together they performed complementary roles to "Serve the People," the people here being personified by rural women who had shed their blood and died at the hands of shamans. The gendered

representations of state doctors and the "People" inspired both popular belief in medical science and a sense of moral debt and emotional gratitude to the Party-state.

The Party deployed religious terminology to convey its new narrative of salvation in ways that were comprehendible to local people. When rural folks visited doctors trained in Western medicine, they might need time to figure out the new meanings of familiar terms; for instance, the transfer of *zhen* 針 from folk healer's needle to doctor's syringe; *dao* 刀 from the shaman's broadsword to the surgeon's scalpel; or *yao* 藥 from herbal medicines boiled in water to new, Westernized pills or powder. They would, however, be much quicker to appreciate the "living god" or "living bodhisattva" reflected in a doctor's medical skills and heroic self-sacrifices since these were all common themes in popular operas, folktales, morality books, and religious lore. Rejecting the shaman's healing power, CCP propaganda constructed a gendered narrative of state doctors who promised the same kind of miraculous healing, selfless sacrifice, and saintly compassion that had deep roots in rural culture. Such a narrative of medical service supported the Party's benevolence not only through the universal values of science and reason but also by appealing to locally inspired sensibilities.

Foreign Doctors and Local Doctors

Party media reported on two other types of doctors in Yan'an: foreign doctors and local doctors. Unsurprisingly, both groups were comprised solely of men and thus reinforced conventional elite perceptions of male authority in the practice of medicine. In different ways, they complemented the Party's promotion of medical science. Foreign doctors were never part of the anti-shaman stories. As the personal embodiment of advanced Western medicine, they belonged to the CCP's broader narrative of the global support from the international communist community.[30] The most celebrated was the late Dr. Norman Bethune (Bai Qiu'en 白求恩, 1890–1939), a Canadian surgeon who joined the Communist war efforts in 1938 and died on the front line in 1939. Mao memorialized him in a famous essay as a martyr of internationalism who personified the "spirit of absolute selflessness."[31] A hospital in Yan'an was named after him. Dr. Bethune became a role model for medical workers, Party members, and, by the time of the Cultural Revolution, the entire Chinese population.

While Dr. Bethune was a martyr to emulate, Dr. Andrei Yakovlevich Orlov (Aluofu 阿洛夫, 1905–?) served as a living example. Orlov was dispatched by the Soviet government to Yan'an in May 1942 and was chief surgeon in the Central Hospital until the end of the war. A son of factory workers, his successful career supported the CCP narrative about the lives of the laboring classes in the Soviet Union, and his Soviet background guaranteed him high status in Yan'an. He was awarded the honor of a "special-class model medical worker" in June 1944. Party media hailed him as a people's doctor who had been innovative to overcome primitive medical conditions, and had dedicated himself to curing ordinary villagers, factory workers, and foot soldiers, and training unskilled workers into nurses and doctors.[32] Whether a martyr or a living example, each of the two foreign doctors represented not only advanced Western medicine but also how international communists could be brought to the Maoist terms to "Serve the People."

In addition to Western science and international communist solidarity, the Party had to mobilize "old-style doctors."[33] In 1944, the CCP named two scholar-doctors, Ren Heping 任和平 (1891?–?) and Bi Guangdou 畢光斗 (1879–1970), as model doctors and elected them to the Border Region Congress. The *Liberation Daily* extolled their "remarkable" skills and enthusiastic embrace of the Party's call to share their secret drug recipes and learn from Western medicine. In contrast to the shaman swindlers, Ren and Bi were reported to offer frequent pro-bono services to the cadres and the people. Party media made a special point that Ren "always opposes female shamans and horse lads and never believes in ghosts and spirits," and that Bi "advises people not to use drugs prescribed by shamans."[34] The Party turned these scholar-doctors into anti-shaman heroes, but the statement also reveals that shamans also prescribed drugs.

The Party's cultivation of traditional local doctors was not just limited to the top-level scholar-doctors. In July 1944, a throng of officials, gentry leaders, militia men, and a folk music band arrived at the home of a local doctor named Cui Yuerui 崔岳瑞 (1896–1965), a native of Buzhang 卜掌 village in Dingbian County. They showered him with plaques, banners, and a badge with Mao's image on it. Cui was then elected a member of the county government and a representative to participate in the BRCE Convention in October. At the conference, the government officially called for a "Cui Yuerui campaign," casting Cui as a model in the use of medicine to defeat superstition.[35]

Unlike Ren and Bi, Cui had only rudimentary old-style education. Party media praised Cui as a local doctor who "had never believed in spirits and ghosts since his childhood." News stories traced his strong anti-superstition views back to 1934, before the Communist take-over of Shaanbei. They report that in the space of three years, a string of shamans came and went in the treatment of Cui's sick sister-in-law. It cost the family a great fortune, but she still died. It was then that Cui decided to "study medicine really hard so that he could use it as a weapon against shamans and *yinyang* masters."[36] In the telling of the *Liberation Daily*, Cui becomes a native advocate of scientific knowledge and class consciousness:

HE [CUI] SAYS: "Gods and spirits are fraud."
PEOPLE: "If there are no gods and spirits, why do people get sick?"
CUI: "Because the five viscera are subject to coldness and heat. If you don't believe me, let me give you some treatment."
PEOPLE: "What about the fact that cats capture [the soul] of babies at night?"
CUI: "That is an illness. The babies have contracted infantile convulsion, either acute or chronic."
PEOPLE: "If there are no gods and spirits, why are there wind, rain and thunder? Why does the sun rise from the East and fall onto the West? Can it walk by itself if there are no gods and spirits? Why do babies cry when they poop?"
Cui answers each of these questions with scientific knowledge.
PEOPLE: "If there are no gods and spirits and no ghosts, why did people in the past still worship them?"
CUI: "This is how the kings in the past cheated people. The kings led people to believe in gods and spirits, so that they could suppress and exploit the masses and enslave them."[37]

It was likely, as the newspaper reported, that the costly death of his sister-in-law had fixed Cui's determination to shun all gods and spirits. It was also possible that many folk healers like him had become self-taught herbalists and acupuncturists for similar reasons. With a moderate level of education, Cui might have also gained some basic knowledge of natural science. But without Party education, it was unlikely that Cui would have produced a Marxist explanation of religion as a tool of the ruling class. Clearly, Party journalists put words into Cui's mouth to justify the Party's emphasis on scientific education as something deriving from rural people's own experiences.

Under his influence, the *Liberation Daily* reported, Cui's village had become an anti-superstition model village: "No family has spiritual amulets in the rafters. Nor are there any shrines. None believe in gods and spirits. None burn incense during the New Year period. None invite geomancers for major household events, and none recite scriptures."[38] In 1944, eleven out of the nineteen families in the village had purportedly burned images of their household gods (Figure 4.1). Cui's success was likely an exaggeration; nevertheless, the newspaper framing still presented Cui's anti-superstition motives as self-evident "facts" that he had discovered by himself, which would confirm that the campaign messages were simple objective truths that did not need persuasion. Cui's "discovery" represented the masses' own revolutionary potential, waiting to be activated under the Party's leadership.

Party propaganda distinguished traditional doctors from shamans and folk healers. The former used the "science" of traditional medicine to oppose shamans and denounce gods and spirits. Together with state doctors and foreign doctors, they saved the rural people from the evil clutches of

Figure 4.1 "Zhang Wanjun burns images of gods" (Zhang Wanjun shao shenxiang 張萬鈞燒神像). *JFRB*, 8/21/1944.

ritual healers in the same grand narrative: to serve the people is to serve the Party-state.

2. Show and Tell: Exhibiting Science against Superstition

Exhibitions

Exhibitions are a modern invention. Drawing on Foucault's theory of disciplinary power, British sociologist Tony Bennett argues that, albeit presented in different forms of control, the confinement of prisons and the exhibition of museums are both institutional articulations of power and knowledge in modern societies. He famously coined the control mechanism of exhibitions as the "exhibitionary complex": modern institutions stage exhibitions to educate citizens and establish a society of surveillance through the practice of "show and tell."[39] Exhibitions in China during the Maoist period were standard expressions of the exhibitionary complex: they were supposed to establish a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist outlook of the world, inculcate values and knowledge structures dictated by the Party, and motivate people to participate in the revolution.[40] In particular, exhibitions on public health and science provided critical materials for the anti-superstition campaign and science dissemination activities.[41]

The Maoist exhibitionary culture could be traced to Yan'an. Since 1939, the Party had developed exhibitions exclusively dedicated to medical and health themes.[42] The most celebrated one was held from July 17 to 26, 1944, immediately following the three-day mass meeting of shaman confessions discussed in Chapter 3. The aforementioned public health official Fu Lianzhang organized the exhibition and mobilized hospitals, clinics, and other medical institutions in Yan'an to contribute to its displays. The exhibition was staged in the Great Auditorium at what had been, since November 1938, the Party Central headquarters at Yang Jiangling 楊家嶺, about three kilometers northwest of Yan'an City. According to the *Liberation Daily*, the exhibition became so popular that it had to repeatedly extend its closing date. When it finally ended on July 26, "by the strong demand of the masses" the organizers had to move it to a new location south of the Yan'an city, on a branch campus of what was at the time Yan'an University, and reopen it on July 31. The exhibition lasted for another eight days. Of the total 10,097 visitors, 4,303 were

local villagers. The remainder consisted of students, intellectuals, cadres, soldiers, and factory workers.[43]

The exhibition organizers announced the shared goals of the anti-shaman and public health campaigns: "Cooperation of Chinese and Western medicine, opposition to shamans, and implementation of sanitary and anti-epidemic measures."[44] Walking into the auditorium, one would be immediately confronted with Mao's inscription on the central wall: "To serve the army and the people." The inscription was flanked by photographic images of Dr. Bethune and Dr. Orlov, reinforcing the universal value of Western medical science under Mao's guiding principle.[45]

Visitors would proceed through the nine stations of themed exhibits in the following order: (1) the damage of unhygienic customs and infectious diseases; (2) struggles against the shamans; (3) anti-epidemic sanitation and hygiene; (4) maternal and child health; (5) nutrition, immunization, and vaccination; (6) state and army medical services to the local people; (7) self-invented and self-made medical equipment and medicines; (8) livestock and veterinary work; and (9) pathological and biological specimens, herbal medicines, and special recipes from local doctors.[46] Strolling through the stations, visitors would learn how lice and flies carry diseases; how and where to build cesspools, latrines, and pig pens; how to wash hands before meals and sterilize scissors and clothing with boiled water when delivering babies; and how lying-in women should recuperate and nurse healthy babies. The room of microscopes was the most attractive, since under their lenses visitors were amazed to see the movements of bacteria and parasites that they did not know even existed.[47]

The spatial display of artifacts was animated by the "show and tell" of doctors and recalcitrant shamans. On the second day of the exhibition, July 18, the Yan'an County government brought to the site local cadres and propaganda workers along with twenty-something local doctors and thirty-something shamans who had just come out of the same mass confession meeting discussed in the previous chapter. Coming into this exhibitory space and engaging themselves with the artifacts and narratives, visitors and curators were at once spectators and inherent elements of the spectacle. They were expected to attest to the truth of science, comply with the values of the exhibition, and subject themselves to self-education, "self-watching," and "self-regulating."[48] The exhibition reveled in the Party-state's authority to control and enlighten its citizens.

The exhibition generated self-regulating power on the part of local doctors. The organizers gathered local doctors with state doctors to offer free on-site medical services. This partially explains why the exhibition attracted so many locals, and indeed why the locals asked for more such exhibitions to be held. Yet such health service was designed not merely to benefit the patients; they were also supposed to educate the local doctors. The *Liberation Daily* reported that many local doctors actively learned from the stations on maternal and child health, pathological and biological specimens, and everyday sanitary and hygienic education. Some were moved to join the Party's cause: of a total of twelve local doctors who participated in on-site services, one skipped his own business for the entire month. Another, an elderly doctor, came to treat patients every day; the aforementioned model doctor Bi Guangdou once wrote as many as fifty prescriptions in one day. By official accounts, reported in the *Liberation Daily*, a total of 1,982 visitors received medical treatment, of which 1,233 were local villagers; state doctors treated 1,359 people, and local doctors treated 623.[49] Such hard statistics supported the Party-state ideology that state doctors lead and local doctors follow, with all embracing Mao's call to serve the people.

The show and tell on the struggle against the shamans aimed to educate both the shamans themselves and the masses. The exhibition's second station displayed the shaman's ritual tools, including the three-pronged broadsword, bells, hemp whips, incense bowls, and spirit tablets. Next to these artifacts were illustrations depicting Yang Hanzhu's ritual torture of Woman Bai, which would "inevitably give rise to anger and resentment among the audience."[50] Such anger and resentment would make visitors all the more receptive to messages in the next two drawings. In one, an angry villager beats up a shaman, and in the other, a family enjoys a life of wealth and health after ditching shamans for doctors.[51] These stories were originally published in the *Liberation Daily* in May and July 1944; now the exhibition reinforced their messaging through visual images.

The thirty-something shamans who attended on July 18 fresh from their confessional meeting were expected to gain a new critical perspective on the ritual tools they had once used and to "feel a sense of glory" for their newly reformed selves. Two of them came forward at the exhibition to repent for their past wrongs and express determination to "work hard in production and pay attention to hygiene." Bai Conghai, whose famous confession we examined in Chapter 2, became a "curator" of the anti-shaman station. His job was to denounce the entire fifteen years of his career as a shaman.[52] When the

exhibition was held the second time, from July 31, the anti-shaman station was moved to an even more noticeable place. An elaborate altar was raised at the entrance to the exhibition hall, and more ritual tools were displayed. The enthusiastic curator this time was none other than the shaman-turned-labor hero Guo Suiyun, whom we met at the end of Chapter 3. A short, stout, and bearded old man, he exhorted the audience during the eight-day long exhibition:

> Hello fellow villagers, please stop here and listen to me. I am an old shaman from the Liulin district. In the past I have swindled so much money and so many things from people. . . . Now I'd like to ask of you, don't believe in ghosts and spirits. . . . If you are sick, just go to see the doctors and get treated at the hospital.[53]

Reformed shamans, like the working wonders of the microscopes on display, embodied the transformative effect of show and tell. After listening to Old Guo's exhortations, several villagers were reported to have immediately taken off the red ribbons they wore on their chests—a local custom to ward off demonic forces following a death in the family. A thirty-five-year-old man initially refused to do so, but finally yielded to Old Guo's tireless protestations. Many more, we are told, were so deeply moved by Guo's words and his living example that they decided to never again believe in shamans.[54] The exhibition thus claimed success in leading both shamans and visitors to shed their traditional beliefs and embrace the officially promoted values of the Party.

Rural women were another target for (re)education. Using charts, illustrations, and material objects, the exhibit covered a whole range of women's health issues, including menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, and prenatal and postnatal care.[55] The *Liberation Daily* especially focused on mothers and mothers-in-law—the former wished to secure her daughter's status in her husband's family, and the latter was concerned with the posterity of her own family. The newspaper reported that many older women in their sixties and seventies walked from distant villages on bound feet and with canes. "They inquired about the right methods to raise babies, more pious and more patient than when they had previously prayed to gods." One older woman named Yin was reported to have lost eleven of her thirteen babies as a result of unhygienic delivery. She cried upon seeing the exhibition and brought her pregnant daughter to the site, pledging that they would go to a doctor when the time came to deliver the baby.[56] The exhibition thus

seemed to meet many of the everyday concerns of rural women, from their own maternal health to their plans for a family.

The health exhibition that lasted from July 17 to August 7 was, in a sense, a culmination of the general campaign rhetoric we have discussed so far. One telling detail illustrates how the exhibitionary complex worked to the ultimate benefit of the Party-state. The older woman Yin mentioned above was reported to have scolded her pregnant daughter for being initially too shy to come to the exhibit: "What are you shy about? The government has thought everything out for us ordinary folks; how can we still be old-fashioned ourselves?"[57] Through public exhibitions such as this one, the Party-state delivered medical science to the rural masses. When science served the people, science served the Party.

Temple Fairs

A modern-style exhibition hall such as the Great Auditorium at Yang Jiangling was only one type of venue to stage campaign events. In fact, a similar show and tell had already taken place two months earlier, from late April to early May 1944, during a major temple fair at the Clear and Cool Mountain on the northeast outskirts of Yan'an City. Also known as Supreme Harmony Mountain (Taihe shan 太和山), the mountain peak had long been home to a cluster of Daoist temples. Around its foothills, there had been several historic Buddhist grottos and, since 1937, the offices of the *Liberation Daily*, the Party Central Press (and thus the aforementioned clinic run by Ruan and Bai), and other CCP media establishments.[58]

The Daoist temples traditionally celebrated (and still do today) the birthday of the "Holy Mother Who Bestows Sons" (*Zisun shengmu niangniang* 子孙圣母娘娘) on every eighth day of the fourth lunar month. The cult of the Holy Mothers, which was very popular in northern China, centered around nine goddesses of pregnancy, childbirth, childrearing, and other aspects of maternal and child health (Figure 4.2).[59] At Supreme Harmony Mountain, the annual temple fair usually lasted for more than ten days, and supposedly attracted several thousands of people, especially women, from near and far. Temple fairs like this were major religious, recreational, and market events. They energized great numbers of local people who would burn incense and make vows as well as throw themselves into the bustle of the market and

Figure 4.2 Holy Mothers in the temple atop Supreme Harmony Mountain. Photo by the author, 2014.

attend opera and storytelling performances.[60] The fairs operated much like the local people's own show and tell, for gods and for themselves.

On April 30, 1944, the East District chief of Yan'an City, Wang Desheng 王德勝, decided to turn this temple fair in his jurisdiction into an occasion to oppose superstition and advocate medical science and hygiene. Wang made novel arrangements. First, he invited five state doctors and one local doctor to set up a medical station on the temple grounds and offer free health services. Second, he summoned four shamans to the temple fair and assigned them the task of exhorting visitors with their own tales of how gods and spirits do not exist and how people should instead go to doctors when they are ill. Third, he persuaded the resident abbot to remove all divination sticks concerning illnesses and cures from the altars. The abbot should direct those who inquired about illnesses by tossing the sticks at the altars to the medical station instead. The *Liberation Daily* praised these arrangements for providing people, especially women, the opportunity to offer incense and seek medical treatments at the same time.[61] In reality, the doctors shared the

sacred space with the Holy Mother and usurped her power to heal and boost fertility.

The Party newspaper must have seen Wang's ingenious use of the temple fair as a success. Indeed, in inviting to the temple both medical doctors to offer free health services and contrite shamans to share their confessions, Wang's approach was identical to that of the organizers of the aforementioned health exhibition in July. At the BRCE Convention in October, the CCP moved to systematically reform temple fairs in order to educate the masses. The Convention noted that the number of temple fairs ranged from sixty to five hundred per year in the Border Region's various counties. In Suide 綏德 County alone, a person attended, on average, at least three temple fairs a year. The Convention estimated that the total annual expense on temple fairs in the Border Region exceeded several hundred thousand yuan, and that most people sacrificed work time during busy agricultural seasons to attend them. In order to take full advantage of these occasions, the Convention urged local government, first, to participate actively in trade and commerce at the fairs, and second, to propagate Party messages with traditional temple fair performances, such as raree shows, storytelling, and local operas.[62] Where else could the Party-state find such a huge voluntary audience? Temple fairs appear to be ideal settings in which to exercise mass politics.

But not all grassroots cadres had Wang's talent, will, and means to meddle with temple fairs. Some still treated the fairs as superstition and did not dare or care to take action.[63] Others hesitated to step into the traditional domain of the local elite and ritual specialists, who asserted authority over tightly woven social networks to manage everyday temple affairs and host them on behalf of the resident deities. As Adam Chau has argued, hosting is a central concept in Shaanbei's social life. To host ritual events, a household asserts "sovereignty," or power and prestige, in local communities. In the same vein, the hosting power of temple fairs rests in the temple association, which usually comprises members of the local elite. The temple association's planning, organizing, and staging of a temple fair are intrinsically linked to elite dominance in rural society.[64] Moreover, a temple fair's success is measured by the extent to which it is "red and fiery" (*honghuo* 紅火), so much so that Chau describes temple fairs as a ritual of convergence comprising "lots of people" who navigate endless sensory stimulations of "noises, sights, smells and tastes, and ambient sensations." It is through the degree of "red and fiery" that both the "sovereignty" of the temple association and the blessings of gods are validated.[65] The CCP attempt to reform temple fairs had to confront

head on the traditional leadership of temple associations and inspire similar kinds of "red and fiery" sensations.

A careful reading of the Party newspaper's coverage reveals that the CCP's foray onto the temple grounds entailed different degrees of success and failure. Party agents held more sway at the temple fair at Clear and Cool Mountain, which was within arm's length of the CCP's central power base in Yan'an City. The city's East District officials were clearly encouraged by the BRCE Convention's resolution in October 1944. In spring 1945, they implemented grander plans to move the annual temple fair at Clear and Cool Mountain five kilometers northeast, close to both the medical resources of the Norman Bethune International Peace Hospital and to the propaganda troupes from the Lu Xun Academy of Arts and Literature (hereafter Luyi), the CCP's leading cultural establishment at Yan'an.[66] The government now acted as the "host" and took over the planning, organizing, and staging of the fair. It charged central and local administrative, health, educational, and propaganda units with new divisions of labor: some would produce propaganda materials and performances; some would provide medical services; and officials at county, district, and township levels would manage the logistics. The planning team aimed to create a "red and fiery" atmosphere in new terms, combining public exhibition of illustrations, microscopes, and medical stations with singing, dancing, and drama performances.[67] The success seemed to have been ephemeral. By 1946, the Party newspaper complained about the "lack of preparation" and a shortage of on-site medical personnel. It did not mention any atmosphere of "red and fiery."[68]

Outside Yan'an City, the CCP's call to reform temple fairs extended to the SGN Border Region and, in one report, to the Mount Taihang 太行 base area in Shanxi 山西 Province as well (Map 0.2).[69] Besides the standard practices of medical services and anti-superstition shows, some local officials ventured to reallocate temple fair revenues to fund health cooperatives, schools, or other public programs.[70] Others used the occasions to teach new farming skills and stimulate commercial exchanges among rural cooperatives.[71] After the Civil War formally broke out in mid-1946, propaganda teams descended upon multiple temple fairs to condemn the American imperialists and the GMD of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石, 1887–1975).[72] In these cases they claimed to have had an impact on several thousand rural folks, but these were likely reported more as models than as widespread practices. Reports

on these activities were meant to serve as examples for grassroots cadres and cultural workers who might have struggled to crack the temple fairs.

Even officially acclaimed examples hinted at accommodations and negotiations rather than reforms wholly on the Party's terms. At a temple fair held at Zhidan 志丹 (known as Bao'an 保安 before 1936) County about ninety kilometers to the west of Yan'an, fourteen cadres dispersed into the crowd upon arrival at a temple fair. Each took a separate spot, engaged in "casual" conversations with passersby, and deliberately raised their voice to attract more listeners. After enough people had gathered for the "heat and noise" of the conversation, the cadres began to "propagate concrete current policies." One clever cadre saved time by directly cutting into a crowd that had been drawn into a brawl and presumably turned the spectators into his audience.[73] All cadres complied with the existing structure of the temple fair and propagated under the habitual expectations of "red and fiery" spectacles.

The same news story hailed the Zhidan temple fair association's contribution of its incense money to public use. A careful look at the actual terms, however, suggests that such a decision might have still benefited the temple more than the "public": 5,000 yuan went to the head of the temple association; the sale of all offerings in kind, to the sum of 50,000 silver dollar yuan, were deposited with the rural cooperative's credit union for "future" temple reforms; twenty-three brooms were donated to district and township offices and schools; and one *jin* (half a kilo) of cooking oil was given to a veteran soldier.[74] Only the (relatively insignificant) brooms and cooking oil were genuine charitable donations. Neither the head of the association nor the temple itself made any real financial sacrifice. The large cash deposit supported the community-based rural cooperative championed by the government, but it nevertheless remained in an account for the temple association under the pretext of future reforms. In contrast to the temple fair at Clear and Cool Mountain, this local government farther away from Yan'an claimed no hosting responsibility and conformed rather than confronted the old practices.

Regardless of whether the government was able to assert any hosting power, most of the propaganda successes at temple fairs seem to have come from hygienic education, on-site medical consultations, and distribution of free maternal care packages. The propaganda might have exaggerated the popularity of these actions, but, as we have seen in regard to exhibitions, these methods appealed to the rural populace, especially women, for good reason. Compared to the state-created space of the exhibition hall, temple

fairs honoring the Holy Mothers offered a more familiar setting in which rural women could navigate with ease.[75] By making modern medicine and hygiene education available to the rural population, the CCP's push for population growth coincided with the fertility and maternal health demands of rural women.

The popularity of these health services and education may, however, have been offset by contentions over folk performances, which had been the central core of the "red and fiery" features of all temple fairs. The CCP propaganda troupes attempted to perform newly reformed song-and-dance *yangge* plays featuring new types of characters and new topics.[76] Their anti-shaman plays would enact the standard scenes of the health exhibitions, featuring a shaman ritual persecution of his victims, his defeat by a state doctor, and his confession and reform thereafter. A real-life local shaman would be brought onto the stage on these occasions, and he would repent for his past wrongs and exhort people to believe in medicines. Such plays might have attained a good degree of success among the masses, especially when they were staged in the power center of Yan'an.[77]

How these new plays fared in traditional fairs, however, remained a question. One propaganda worker praised *yangge* plays based on her own performing experience at a temple fair but did so mainly to refute a popular saying that "*yangge* does not work at temple fairs," suggesting that there was a popular undercurrent that rejected the new forms.[78] In another news report, the elderly head of one temple association rejected the new *yangge* performance. He was allegedly met with resistance from young attendees, who yelled: "Your authority is invalid. We want our democratic rights!" Clearly, the propaganda troupe tried to challenge the temple association's hosting power of the fair, but how likely is it that the mostly illiterate rural fairgoers exclaimed the neologism of *democratic rights*? Even if they did, how likely is it that the ordinary young fairgoers overruled the decisions of the fair's senior organizer? The newspaper presented this story of a propaganda troupe's intrusion as a story of young people demanding their rights. In critically citing the old head's remarks, however, the news story exposed a very real concern among the fairgoers: "Our people here are still superstitious, and please do not perform any *yangge* plays against shamans or how to care for babies. We like shows about loyalty, filiality, and chastity."[79] Traditional plays still carried the day.

The government troupes and local fair organizers had to compromise between the old and the new. Despite the new *yangge* plays being pumped with

anti-superstition and pro-hygiene hype, some news reports admitted that many fairgoers still insisted on praying to gods and spirits.[80] The renowned female writer Ding Ling 丁玲 (1904–1986) reports witnessing such an occasion at a traditional market fair in August 1944. The fair organizers had hired a private troupe to perform old plays for several days, and the performances drew large crowds. But the private troupe yielded the stage for one afternoon to the township mayor, who first ushered in a shaman to make a confession, followed by a state factory troupe staging an anti-shaman play called *What Should You Do When Your Child Is Sick?* According to Ding, the play was rough and jerky, but it was highly sensational for the women in the audience, many of whom presumably had lost their child(ren) in shamanic healing rituals. The afternoon ended with popular agreement that one should take a sick child to see medical doctors, and the private troupe resumed old plays the next day.[81] Ding ranked the afternoon's activities as the most popular and most educational of the fair, but she also painted a realistic picture of the overall situation: the old plays continued to run as usual, while the new play enjoyed a one-afternoon spotlight. The fairgoers did not have to pick and choose between the old and the new because both contributed to the "red and fiery" experience needed for a good fair. This was likely the outcome at most of the fairs that the CCP planned to reshape.

In order to push for rural development, the CCP launched side-by-side campaigns to fight against shamans and to promote public health. The campaigns shared many features with those of the GMD reformers, but rural and wartime conditions, as well as ideological orientation, set the CCP campaigns apart from the GMD ones. First, the CCP created a hierarchical order of doctors to "Serve the People." While male state doctors performed miracles of science to ward off superstition, female doctors complemented this male-dominated picture with bodily sacrifices. Foreign, state, and local doctors epitomized the combined power of medical science and the Party-state's benevolence.

Second, Maoist mass politics dominated both campaigns. Having asserted an authoritative narrative of knowledge through stories and editorials in state media outlets such as the *Liberation Daily*, the Party sought to reinforce this authority in action through a common repertoire of show-and-tell events at exhibitions and temple fairs. The public display of knowledge and

power animated the Party's authoritative narrative in visual, spatial, and affective terms. In particular, the public exhibitions operated as a disciplinary device for the Party-state to assert its authority through claims to knowledge, evidenced by doctors, medical services, contrite shamans, and public displays of science. As such, they set useful precedents for later mass education and mass mobilizations.[82]

Third, if the CCP's uses of religion and traditional beliefs examined in Chapters 2 and 3 were subtle and at times unintentional, in this chapter we see that the Party drew on local religion more openly and deliberately to serve mass politics. Unlike the well-orchestrated public exhibitions, traditional temple fairs generated a "red and fiery" atmosphere around the resident deities without a predetermined structure and centralized goals.[83] The CCP saw great propaganda value in temple fairs, but its attempts to reconfigure their amorphous "red and fiery" ambience for its own occasions of show-and-tell needed to accommodate, rather than reshape, existing local cultures.

Traditional temple fairs' penchant for old plays posed a special challenge for the CCP: how should the Party's anti-superstition objectives be "performed" in artistic and literary works for rural audiences? We will see how propaganda workers addressed this issue in the next chapter.

PART II
THE STORIES

5

Catching the "Red-Shoed Demoness"

On August 12, 1944, the *Liberation Daily* published a news story with a lengthy title: "'Ghosts' Haunted, 'Ghosts' Captured: The 'Revenant Ghost from the Grave,' the 'Blood-Stench Demon,' and the 'Red-Shoed Demoness,' All Securely Captured."[1] Out of more than eighty anti-shaman news stories the *Liberation Daily* published in 1944 and 1945, this story about the Red-Shoed Demoness (*Hongxie nüyaojing* 紅鞋女妖精) soon became one of the best known among both the urbanites and the rural folks of Yan'an. Enthusiastic cultural workers adapted the story for multiple forms of stage performance. Understandably, the CCP always favored oral and visual art forms as the most efficient tools to mobilize the mostly illiterate rural masses.[2] *Mao's Talks* in 1942 made it even more urgent for propaganda workers to deliver Party directives by studying "the language of the masses" and uniting their "thoughts and emotions" with those of "the masses of workers, peasants, and soldiers."[3] The making of the anti-shaman campaign propaganda was therefore a process of transformation not only for the shamans and rural masses but also for the old forms of art and literature, as well as for the propaganda workers themselves.

This chapter examines the changing narratives of the *Red-Shoed Demoness* (hereafter, italics mark the various iterations of it as a work, and roman the character/concept) from the Party newspaper's coverage to stage performances. Three adaptations from the Yan'an period survive today, including one *yangge* play and two *shuoshu*, or Shaanbei storytelling tales. Section 1 explores the original news story and its potential for propaganda workers' adaptations in historical, literary, and religious-cultural contexts. Section 2 studies how two groups of urban educated cultural workers attempted to transform the old genres of the *yangge* play and *shuoshu* storytelling in reworking the story. Section 3 compares and contrasts their retelling with that of a reformed folk storyteller.

Undoubtedly, all three adaptations were created as part of the anti-shaman campaign, yet in recasting the news story through performing arts, the artists strove to find a delicate balance between serving the Party agenda

and attracting a rural audience. Regardless of their differences and shared intentions, the balance did not always tilt the Party's way. The theatrical elements of the *Red-Shoed Demoness* allowed leeway for cultural workers and the folk storyteller to dramatize much of the superstition that the campaign was supposed to eradicate. For this reason, the story's popularity led to its own demise during the period of stricter CCP scrutiny in the early 1950s: to this day the *Red-Shoed Demoness* remains largely unknown to even learned experts in modern Chinese history and literature. The brief life of the *Red-Shoed Demoness* reveals both the success and the limits of how the anti-shaman campaign used art and literature to advance its propaganda goals.

1. The Story Told and Untold

The News Story

"A ghost! As soon as the ghost is mentioned, people's hairs stand on end!" With such sensational expressions, Party journalist Feng Senling 馮森齡 (or 森令, 1920–1992) sets up tensions that demand the reader's attention.[4] The story concerns five villages on the borders of Yan'an, Ansai, and Zichang 子長 Counties, about seventy kilometers north of Yan'an City in Panlong 蟠龍 District. Feng recounts that the area had long been inhospitable on account of its high levels of banditry until 1935, when the CCP brought order there. But in April 1944, Feng tells us, the peaceful farming life was again disrupted: ghosts lurked in the dark, throwing clumps of dirt at people, crying out in shrieks, setting livestock loose, and lighting haystacks on fire. Many frightened villagers abandoned their crops and moved away, and no one who stayed dared to venture outside after sunset. Only the shaman Cheng Xiang and his friend Lu the Fourth (Lu Si 魯四), a young loafer, enjoyed talking about the ghosts. According to them, the ghosts visited their houses frequently and even appeared during a storytelling session that Lu hosted at home: "A two-inch high little demon lingers on the spirit tablet and listens to the story . . . and it left two thousand yuan for the storyteller." Shaman Cheng claimed that he found the footprints of a woman's bound feet on the hilltop roof of cave houses (Figure 5.1). The ghost who left these traces, Cheng announced, must be the "Red-Shoed Demoness."

In response to this disorder, the local government dispatched an array of cadres to "catch the ghost," including a police officer, the township head, and

Figure 5.1 Tiered cave houses in the Yan'an Region. Photo by Harrison Forman (1904–1978), 1944. American Geographical Society Library Digital Photo Archive, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Libraries.

the district chief. All succumbed to the mysterious power of the invisible. The police officer and the township head both fled after one of them discovered mysterious lumps of dirt in his dinner and the other found a dead pheasant in his bed. The district chief was horrified that Cheng's wife, haunted by a "blood-stench demon," lay in bed with a pool of blood. At his wit's end, the district chief filed a report to higher authorities.

The county government soon sent its head of police, Chief Zhang, along with four soldiers armed with their "best guns." Zhang arrived with a strategic plan. First, he investigated the matter with the villagers. Then he decided to stay in shaman Cheng's house, which the ghosts presumably haunted the most—to the extent that they had already forced Cheng to move out of his village. When nighttime came, Chief Zhang dispatched soldiers to ambush the demon at entrance of Cheng's village. In the meantime, he ordered a search of Cheng's house, where local cadres found hemp strings and three soles made for women's bound feet: one could make footprints by tying the soles to ordinary shoes. They also found a pail covered by dirty blood, a whip, and a miniature human head cutout from a poster. Chief Zhang and the cadres then caught Lu the Fourth at an abandoned cave house. When

confronted with the evidence found in Cheng's house, Lu confessed: shaman Cheng had ordered him to hide until night and then go out and throw lumps of dirt, light fires, and splash blood at people's houses. He plotted with Cheng so that he could use the money Cheng paid him, ultimately from villagers who had hired Cheng to pacify the ghosts, to acquire a wife.

Following Lu's confession, Chief Zhang's team rushed to arrest Cheng. Surrounded by a crowd of villagers, Cheng invoked his patron deity, who yelled out on his behalf: "Do not bully my horse lad [a.k.a. my medium]!" But the crowd broke into laughter as Chief Zhang pushed Cheng down to the floor, forcing him out of his alleged trance. The chief then interrogated Cheng's wife, who quickly confessed: "He beat me up if I refused to make the soles. . . . He ordered me to feign 'blood wooziness' (*xuemi* 血迷) to frighten the district chief, and he poured goat's blood into my pants." Cheng was forced to finally admit his crime: he had collected a pail of goat's blood to feign the "Blood Stench Ghost" and had left the human head cutout and two thousand yuan on the altar during the storytelling session. He had made up everything about the Red-Shoed Demoness.

Using combat personnel and strategy, Chief Zhang had thus "captured" the Demoness. According to Feng's report, local people were gathered to attend the struggle session against Cheng. In an effort to escape public humiliation, Cheng had jumped off a cliff and injured himself. But his injuries did not pacify the villagers' anger, and he was dragged to the meeting and presented with the evidence of his wrongdoing. A familiar scene of mass struggle ensued: angry villagers called for violent means to punish Cheng, from beating him up to burning him alive. Feng ends the story by noting that Chief Zhang had prevented mass violence and had restored peace to the villages.

Officials, Demons, and the Shaman

The title, the ghost imagery, and the intricate story line of Feng's account stimulated sensations typically evoked by ghost exorcism—a familiar theme in traditional ritual culture, popular storytelling, and dramatic performances. Yet Feng's account does not align with the central themes and gender rhetoric of the anti-shaman campaign. Shaman Cheng appears very different from the model campaign target Yang Hanzhu. Cheng is not a ritual healer or killer, and his victims are not female patients. Besides the fabricated

demon, the only woman in the story is "Cheng's wife," and there are no heroic doctors to save her. It is the haunting ghost—the Red-Shoed Demoness—that commands the central attention of the story.

Feng may have simply wanted to report the "facts" on the ground rather than regurgitate campaign themes.[5] As new settlements on what had previously been deserted land (on account of the banditry), the five villages in Feng's story were thinly populated in 1944. One village only had four households, and the five villages altogether probably had around twenty households.[6] Moreover, they were not easily accessible. Even in 2018, it still took me and my local friend about three hours to get there from Yan'an City by car, and as we drove, the modern highway transitioned first to a narrowly paved one-lane road and then to unpaved and dusty paths winding up and down over the loess hills. It is not hard to imagine that in 1944 cultural workers and journalists like Feng would not have discovered the same kind of direct confrontations between shamans and doctors in the rural villages as one would find in the immediate surroundings of Yan'an City. At the time, there were no resident doctors, and the villages were beyond the reach of Yan'an's limited medical resources.

The remote location, however, would not have sheltered these villages from the bombardment of anti-shaman propaganda. From late April to August 1944, news about public trials and mass confession meetings were widely spread throughout the Border Region. Shamanic practices were banned, accompanied by official initiatives to establish "a health cooperative in every district, a doctor in every township, and a midwife in every village."[7] Even though Feng's story in August mentions no doctor, mobile medical teams were dispatched from Yan'an to the countryside in the summer of 1944, including to Panlong District where the five villages were located. Whether a team had arrived at the villages cannot be verified, but the propaganda would likely have caused enough anxiety among local shamans to have provoked some resentment and resistance.[8] For a shaman, what could be more powerful than ghosts to scare away outside forces from his ritual territory?

The confrontations between local cadres and Cheng's ghosts were also nothing new. They echoed the enduring struggles between political authorities and demonic forces in the history of Chinese ritual culture. Shamans were known experts in conjuring spirits and managing ghosts in local society, and in some cases they threatened the authority of local government. As Judith Boltz succinctly puts it, ghost hauntings and demonic disturbances were often a "recasting of the endless tug of war between the

governed and the government."[9] The ability of local officials to propitiate the troublesome spirits would directly affect how they could maintain order and peace in their jurisdictions. Officials since Song times had resorted to a great variety of exorcistic means to govern, ranging from the power of their official seal, to military armaments, to Daoist ritual performances. While some won the battles, many succumbed to the fear of ghosts, acknowledged their failures, or settled with terms of appeasement.[10]

Feng's account resonates with similar battles between officials and spirits in traditional literature. It does not deploy the anti-shaman campaign's secular outlook and scientific vocabulary to dispel the fear of ghosts. Rather, the story ascribes the exorcistic power of the cadres according to their rank, from township to district and then county level. Nor are local cadres' failed attempts at exorcism mere entertaining twists. They reflect the reality that most rank-and-file cadres shared with the rural populace the common conviction that ghosts could wield destructive power in the world. Their fear justified ritual exorcism—if they continued to fail, the only choice left would be to hire a shaman. Feng's story, naturally, had to end with the victory of the officials. But Chief Zhang succeeded in the same fashion as the imperial officials: both took ghosts and shamans as their enemies, and both resorted to military weapons and personnel to fight the malignant forces. They even shared the common perception that "the greatest weapon of exorcism was command of the loudest noise": for Song dynasty officials it was the Thunder Rites; for Chief Zhang it was four soldiers and their "best guns."[11] Feng's narrative draws more from imperial-era tales of exorcistic officials than from the CCP narrative of scientific wonders common in the other anti-shaman news stories we have discussed up to this point.

Feng's story, however, is only the truth half-told. According to the records of the Border Region high court, Cheng actually fled and therefore escaped trial and a court verdict. Lu the Fourth, whose full name appears from the records to be Lu Jiarong 魯加榮, was detained for ten months and then released.[12] The struggle session at the end of Feng's story did *not* have the rehabilitating effect on the shaman that we have seen in previous chapters.

More than seventy years later, the Red-Shoed Demoness still lingers in local memory. When I visited the villages and pressed beyond the established story line, answers from the elderly villagers further undermined Chief Zhang's victory. As notorious as he had been made throughout the Border Region, the shaman "Cheng Xiang" turns out to be Feng's own

phonetic rendition of the shaman's nickname, which could also be rendered as "Chenghai" or "Chihao." Neither Feng nor any of the propaganda workers, and not even the high court, ever charged the shaman with his full and correct name. Furthermore, according to the villagers, Cheng Xiang was from the Yang family, a well-to-do farming household that had settled in the village long before the 1940s. Why a shaman from such a family would try to terrorize his neighbors for money remains unexplained. Finally, the villagers I met confirmed the court record that after the incident, the shaman fled to neighboring Zhidan County and resumed a prosperous shaman career under a different name.[13] He thus survived Chief Zhang's crackdown beyond Feng's story line.

Cheng Xiang's escape and secret return to a shaman career may indicate a much larger phenomenon in reaction to the Yan'an campaign. Shamans were denounced or reformed, but like Cheng, they could also flee and resume practices elsewhere. Feng's story line—that Chief Zhang resorted to traditional methods to catch the shaman and defeat the Demoness—and what went beyond that story line—that the shaman was not defeated at all—reveal that, at least in the 1940s, the Party's discourse of science may have barely scratched the surface of local society.

As for the Red-Shoed Demoness herself: her story lived on, in large part because Feng's artful news reporting echoed traditional storytelling of the strange and demonic. It was precisely these features of the story that inspired more propaganda adaptations and popular fascination with the story.

The Charm of the Red-Shoed Demoness

Popular interest in the Red-Shoed Demoness stemmed from the enduring appeal of ghosts and spirits in Chinese ritual life and literary tradition. Here I use "ghost" for the Chinse word *gui* and "demon/demoness" for *yaojing* to reflect the two different usages in Feng's title. It should be noted, however, that Feng uses the two terms interchangeably, and so do local people. In Chinese literary and religious tradition, female ghosts are believed to be impregnated with excessive *yin* energy in the underworld and are prone to haunt the living. They can appear at midnight hours as stunning beauties to enchant young men. Through sexual encounters they assimilate men's life essences, in the form of both semen and blood, so that they can resurrect themselves. Because of their destructive power and erotic appeal, female

ghosts since imperial times have always been a favored topic in anecdotal literature, storytelling, and drama performances.[14]

If the general theme of female ghosts fascinated both the educated elite and the largely illiterate rural folks, the demonic activities in Feng's story also reflected popular lore about hairy ghost-spirits (*mao guishen*毛鬼神, also known as "cat ghost-spirits," *mao guishen* 貓鬼神) in many parts of north and northwest China. Like the capricious and highly gendered fox spirits, the hairy ghost-spirits haunt houses, harm livestock, possess men and women and make them ill and deranged, and transform themselves into beautiful women or handsome men to enchant the opposite sex.[15] In central Shanxi, it is the obligation of a woman to set up a shrine to the spirit in a corner of her family's storage room. On the shrine is a half-foot-tall figurine wearing a red upper coat: if the woman's offerings please the spirit, it could bring in grain from others to the family storage. Otherwise, it might drain away the family's grain storage for others.[16] Once properly propitiated, the hairy ghost-spirits can help and protect the host family. In some places, people believed that shamans have special capabilities to send the spirits to haunt people and then make money by offering them exorcistic services.[17] As Feng's story shows, Cheng's Demoness haunted like a hairy ghost-spirit, and Cheng had planned to make money by exorcising her.

In Shaanbei, the hairy ghost-spirit's link to women, especially to women's bound feet, was well recognized as a result of a popular story. According to the story, which many still believed to be true until the 1980s, a hairy ghost-spirit took residence in a village in Bao'an County (coincidently where Cheng Xiang resumed his shaman business) from 1911 to 1915. The haunting began with intermittent croaks and tittering trills like that of frogs and toads. It terrorized the entire village, and exorcistic rituals did not help. A month later, the sound gradually evolved into a woman's voice, a sign that she had been propitiated. People often heard her voice, and on one occasion someone traced her voice into a flour storage cistern and discovered the footprints of a woman's bound feet. The spirit disappeared in winter 1915, leaving a long track of footprints in the snow. By the 1940s, stories about this hairy ghost-spirit had been widely circulated, and they even became a favorite conversation topic among top CCP officials from Bao'an County, such as Liu Zhidan 劉志丹 (1903–1936), founder of the CCP base in Shaanbei (in whose name Bao'an was renamed to Zhidan in 1936), and the famous judge Ma Xiwu 馬錫五 (1899–1962).[18] If shaman Cheng indeed intended to do what he was accused of doing, then this popular story may have provided him with suitable

material for the disembodiment and mysterious footprints he was accused of simulating.

The color red, attributed to the Demoness's shoes, stood out in the popular imagination. It is the color of blood, of course, the source of female pollution and fertility associated with menstruation and childbirth.[19] Traditional medicine recognized that women's menstrual and postpartum hemorrhages could cause "blood wooziness," meaning fainting and mental disorders.[20] In Shaanbei, women's "blood wooziness," as seen in the case of Cheng's wife, was commonly attributed to the "blood-stench demon," which was believed to have come out of the grave to haunt people. The bloody scene staged by Cheng's wife fused the fear of the "blood-stench demon," a variant of the "revenant ghost from the grave," with that of the "Red-Shoed Demoness."

Red is also the color of fire and exorcism imbued with the power to revitalize the cosmic order. It is the color of all kinds of traditional festival objects such as drums, lanterns, paper cutouts, New Year prints, and opera costumes. It is dominant on charms, seals, ritual texts and tools, and on garments for gods, high officers, and ritual masters.[21] Red is frequently used in the worship of hairy ghost-spirits. In the Tianshui 天水 region of Gansu 甘肅 Province, hairy ghost-spirits are worshipped in small and makeshift shrines that contain nothing but small hanging rolls of red cloth. On the twenty-second of every seventh month, shamans would wear red coats and red headbands to honor the spirits.[22] The color reinforces the shaman's power to appease and manipulate the capricious spirits.

When red is used to name, describe, and dress a woman, it indicates beauty, feminine charm, and eroticism. Red fabrics and clothing are especially associated with female sexuality. They are part of a young woman's bridal attire, connoting both auspicious union and heightened sexuality. Even in the Maoist model operas, as literary scholar Rosemary Roberts notes, "red jackets and suits of the women also carry the deeply embedded cultural symbolism of women as sensual and sexualized objects of desire."[23]

Of all clothing for women, red shoes for bound feet, for which Cheng's demon was known, were the most salient symbol of female beauty and sexuality. While many literati men took women's shoes as fetish objects and erotic symbols, shoes women made for themselves often conveyed their own senses of female virtue and bonding in a male-dominated society.[24] In Shaanbei folk songs (*xintianyou* 信天遊, lit. "roaming in heaven"), red shoes frequently appear as women's reference to their own beauty and romantic interests, such as in the following song, entitled "I Look Pretty in My Red Shoes":

Putting on my red shoes I stand on the street,
At once I muddle young men's heartbeat,
I look pretty in my red shoes,
Who cares what the others bleat?

穿上(那)紅鞋街上站,
直把我們年輕人心攪亂,
我穿(那)紅鞋我好看,
與你們旁人毬相干.[25]

The red shoes here embolden the woman to pursue love in defiance of any social constraints. The same and similar title lines appeared frequently in folk songs, alluding to a woman's longing for or a couple's lament over love affairs.[26]

Even after the CCP government banned foot-binding in 1939, red shoes continued to represent female identity and beauty in revolutionary folk songs. In one song, a woman declares that she has joined the revolution: "I take off the red shoes and take up the spear."[27] Another song celebrates the Red Army's victories through a woman's dialogue with a friend:

Bindweed fields are filled with red flowers,
I am really pretty when I put on my red shoes.

The Red Army had left and the White Army came,
What is in your mind when you put on your red shoes?

The Red Army comes and the White Army is gone,
I dance and I shimmy with my red shoes on.

打碗碗(的個)開花就地(你)紅,
我穿上(哪個)紅鞋實在俊.

紅軍(你的個)走了白軍(你)來,
有什麼(哪個)心事你穿紅鞋?

紅軍(你的個)來了白軍走,
我穿上(哪個)紅鞋扭一扭.[28]

The song weaves a woman in red shoes into the joyous arrival of the Red Army. Feminine beauty and revolutionary enthusiasm converged on the color of red.

Literary representations of, and popular beliefs in, female ghosts and hairy ghost-spirits, as well as the rich meanings of the color red and of red shoes, provided cultural workers a fertile ground to cultivate the multiple versions of the *Red-Shoed Demoness* out of Feng's story. In the new context of the revolution, a Red-Shoed Demoness could be simultaneously strange and familiar to both the rural masses and the propaganda workers. She offered a natural subject from which the CCP propaganda effort could remake the old genres of performing arts for the anti-shaman campaign.

2. Reforming the Old into the New

The Red-Shoed Demoness attracted the attention of the Party propagandists in Yan'an. In late 1944, writer Ding Ling, freshly "rectified" from May Fourth feminist to Maoist revolutionary, plunged herself into field research in preparation for a novel she wanted to write on the subject.[29] The artists from Luyi, the most prominent CCP cultural institution at Yan'an, also worked on turning the story into a new opera.[30] Even though both parties later abandoned their projects for new political priorities as a result of the Civil War, this intense interest among leading CCP propagandists nevertheless speaks to the popularity of the Demoness at the time.

It is largely due to Yan'an's Yangge Movement and the Storytelling Campaign that the Demoness survives today as the protagonist in one play and two tales. Spearheaded by the Luyi, the Yangge Movement lasted from late 1942 to 1946, and in 1944, Yan'an alone hosted more than thirty *yangge* troupes.[31] The Storytelling Campaign peaked in April 1945, when several urban-educated writers, poets, and musicians who had participated in the Yangge Movement formed a Storytelling Group.[32] Both the Yangge Movement and the Storytelling Campaign aimed to reinvent traditional performative arts to popularize revolutionary ideas.

The two genres, *yangge* and *shuoshu*, were deeply rooted in local religious culture. Historian David Holm shows that in Shaanbei, *yangge* performances were communal events during the Spring Festival season, lasting from New Year's Day to the Lantern Festival on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month.

They required the annual sponsorship of temple-based local associations (*she* 社). A typical *yangge* troupe comprised master ritual performers and amateur peasant dancers from the same community. The performances followed a rigid ritual order in visiting all temples and households in the community, and they were major events of communal worship and exorcism at a sacred time of cosmic renewal.[33]

Shuoshu was performed in a format and setting distinct from that of *yangge*. It was a profession reserved for itinerant and blind men. Here I follow musicologist Stephen Jones to refer to the storytellers as "bards," who performed solo, with a plucked lute (*sanxian* 三弦) and clappers, in the style of "narrative-singing," which alternated between reciting and singing in rhymed verses.[34] Historian Chang-tai Hung, citing Communist cadres of the time, surmises that because a bard could perform "at any time and place" and with few instruments, the CCP considered storytelling performances to have greater propaganda value than the *yangge* that "required more extensive preparations and substantial equipment."[35]

Contrary to the Communist claim that Hung relies on, however, the bards' performance was not so simple or casual. Both textual and ethnographic research shows that, like shamans and geomancers, bards were ritual specialists in Shaanbei. They would sing "stories for well-being (*ping'an shu* 平安書)" to entertain gods, exorcise ghosts, tell fortunes, cure the sick, and protect the lives of young children. In Shaanbei today, *shuoshu* is performed in three major contexts: individual households (*jiashu* 家書), temple fairs (*huishu* 會書), and village communities (*sheshu* 社書). In each context, the performance is dedicated to gods and spirits on behalf of the sponsors of a family or community, and a bard cannot start a story until he has set up an altar for the gods and followed a rigid ritual procedure while playing certain melodies.[36] Like *yangge*, the entertainment value of *shuoshu* is embedded in the ritual of worship and exorcism in local religious life.

Communist propaganda workers recognized the popularity of *yangge* and *shuoshu* as potentially useful to the revolution but were critical of the old genres. Holm notes that despite cultural workers' extensive writings on the *yangge* form, they were slim on the details of old *yangge* performances. Zhou Yang 周揚 (1907–1989), Luyi's principal at the time, viewed the old *yangge* as "lascivious dancing, feudal superstition, and the antics of the clown."[37] Lin Shan 林山 (1910–1984), a writer from Shanghai 上海 and the leader of the Storytelling Group, reduced the bard's ritual procedure of invoking gods as "superstition" and his fortune-telling as a sideline

job. He dismissed the bards' old stories as reflecting feudal ethics, replete with "banal language and vulgar taste."[38] The Communist reinventions of *yangge* and *shuoshu* were therefore established on the premises of cleansing the two traditional genres of religious contexts and "licentious" content.

By 1943 the new *yangge* was no longer about the "worship of gods" but rather comprised "rice-sprout songs" that supposedly originated from agricultural labor, in line with the Marxist notion that labor should be the main inspiration of art and literature. Accordingly, the propaganda troupes replaced religious characters, clownish figures, and related costumes with new character types: workers, peasants, soldiers, and other representatives of the "new people." The troupes preserved old dance styles that depicted physical labor, and composed new songs combining elements from both traditional and Western music.[39] The working people, not gods and spirits, dominated the new *yangge* stage.

The storytelling performances underwent a similar transition. Lin Shan noted that blind bards were "incapable of labor" but could still "make a livelihood" by telling stories. Recognizing that "storytelling is an art," Lin advocated doing away with the invocation ritual and narratives and replacing old stories with new materials.[40] Another key member of the Storytelling Group, Chen Ming 陳明 (1917–2019, discussed later in this section), simply ignored the ritual components and praised the bards as heroes who "used strings to eulogize the kind-hearted peasants and to mock officials and literati men."[41] Working with the bard Han Qixiang 韓起祥 (1915–1989) (discussed in Section 3), members of the Storytelling Group launched a campaign with the dual aim of learning the old performing arts and educating the bards in new revolutionary content. In 1946, the campaign claimed to have "retrained" 273 out of 483 bards and rewritten over fifty traditional tales.[42] In both *yangge* and *shuoshu*, cultural workers were tasked to create the new by purging superstition and obscenity from the old forms.

Performing Superstition to Eradicate Superstition

Within a month of the publication of Feng's story on August 12, 1944, the Northwestern Literary Work Corps (Xibei wenyi gongzuotuan 西北文藝工作團, hereafter NLWC) had already drafted a *yangge* play entitled *Red-Shoed Demoness* and planned to present the play to the BRCE Convention in

October 1944.[43] Led by the NLWC's head, Su Yiping 蘇一平 (1913–1995), a native of Xi'an who arrived in Yan'an in 1939, the troupe followed the standard mass line procedure of the Yangge Movement and solicited audience feedback for revision after initial performances. The collectively created playscript spans ninety-four pages in its 1946 Yan'an edition, comprising seven acts.[44] For the sake of narrative convenience, I hereafter refer to this play as Su's play.

Besides Su's play, there was an adaptation in the new style of *shuoshu* storytelling by the aforementioned Storytelling Group member Chen Ming. Chen arrived in Yan'an from Shanghai in 1937 and married Ding Ling in 1942. The couple visited the haunted villages and interviewed Chief Zhang in late 1944. While Ding abandoned her novel about the Red-Shoed Demoness, Chen worked with the bard Han Qixiang, who had been performing the tale since late 1944. Chen was very likely trying to establish a model for new stories for the Storytelling Campaign. He experimented with writing the same story in the same genre and distinguished his tale from Han's by giving it a different title: *Record of Quelling the Demoness* (*Pingyao ji* 平妖記). The title followed a literary tradition derived from the famous Ming novel *Quelling the Demons* (*Pingyao zhuan* 平妖傳).[45] Chen finished his tale in February 1945. Also published in 1946, Chen's edition has six sections over eighty-four pages.[46]

Drawing on the two genres of folk performing arts, Su's *yangge* play and Chen's *shuoshu* tale share the same propaganda agenda. From their respective field investigations, they provide more information than Feng's news story on names, characters, and the process of catching the Demoness. The two works also reinsert the main themes of the anti-shaman campaign that Feng's story had omitted. In Su's play, shaman Cheng is a loafer. After the government confiscates his ritual tools and allocates him a piece of land, Cheng refuses to farm and instead fabricates the Demoness. In Chen's tale, the shaman is a quack who walks away with a sizable payment after having killed a sick child in a healing session. The two works thus reconnect Feng's story with the campaign drive to condemn shaman healers and reform loafers.

The campaign messages notwithstanding, the enchanting power of superstition persists in these adaptations, as noted by a line in Chen's tale: "Everybody denies the existence of ghosts and spirits, yet stories of ghosts and spirits are the most vividly remembered."[47] Watching an anti-shaman show at Yan'an in summer 1944, American journalist Harrison Forman observed how scenes containing "superstition" intrigued the locals: the audience burst to laughter when a shaman on stage comically displayed ritual

paraphernalia and entered séance, claiming that the god "grabs me by the sleeve" and that he "absorbs" the god into his body. Another entertaining episode was the ritual spectacle, when the shaman "stripped to the waist and draped himself with a red sash," waving and dancing with his three-pronged broadsword "like an Indian war-dance, stopping now and then to make cabalistic designs on the floor." Forman approvingly concluded that such a show "gives a good idea of the problem of superstition."[48] Indeed, as we will see in the next sections of this chapter, the mass line imperative compelled cultural workers to engage their new messages with the language, themes, and worldviews found in traditional art forms. The propaganda could not fight superstition without performing some superstition.

The Great Peace

Through the reform of old arts and literature, the CCP at Yan'an began a deliberate process of establishing its political-moral authority in traditional terms and laying claim to the heavenly mandate.[49] Subsequently, Su's play and Chen's tale set up the story in a harmonious "heavenly" world under the benevolent rule of the CCP. Su's play, for example, introduces several families farming together in the newly organized village cooperative with these lyrics:

> The sun shines upon a world at peace,
> A wonderful place, our Border Region is better than paradise.
> Last year's crop become this year's seeds,
> We harvest, with enough for our needs.
> Think about our earlier times in Yulin, how we had lived in poverty and hunger,
> After three and a half years in the Border Region, we have turned our lives for better.
> We have bought cattle and land, and we have never had such good circumstances.
> At the Mountain of Wealth, we have taken root, and we enjoy the Great Peace.
>
> 世界清平太陽閃金光,
> 咱邊區好地方賽過天堂.
> 去年留下種子今年種,

打下糧食就不怕鬧饑荒.
想先前在榆林受苦受窮受困,
到邊區三年半咱把身翻.
掙下牛買下地光景好過,
聚財山紮下根享盡太平.[50]

The opening lines of Chen's tale express similar ideas:

The Communist Party rules the SGN [Border Region],
With ample clothing and abundant food, [we] enjoy the Great Peace.

That SGN Border Region, it was once a land of famine,
Failed crops two of every three years,
Having breakfast meant no dinner,
People ate people, and parents sold their sons and daughters,
Officials demanded heavy taxes,
Common people had nowhere to seek justice.
The Red Army rose up in the twentieth year [1931],
Since then the common people have turned their lives for better.

共產黨領導陝甘寧,
豐衣足食享太平.

話說這陝甘寧邊區從前是災荒地,
三年兩頭跌年成,
吃了早飯沒晚飯,
賣兒賣女人吃人,
官府衙門捐稅重,
百姓有冤沒處申.
二十年上紅軍起,
從此百姓翻了身.[51]

Both the play and the tale refer to the CCP's new world as the Great Peace, *taiping* 太平, a utopian ideal that can be traced to Han-dynasty Confucian scholars (206 BCE to 220 CE) who defined sage rulers in relation to people's satisfaction, natural order, and cosmic harmony. The same ideal, further developed in the second-century *Scripture of the Great Peace* (*Taiping jing* 太平經), inspired a Daoist messianic movement aiming to overthrow the corrupted

imperial house at the end of the Han dynasty.[52] Throughout Chinese history, the concept of the Great Peace has been frequently invoked to designate the reigns of great emperors or provide a title for momentous collections of literature by imperial commissions. It also fueled rebellions, such as the movement of Heavenly Kingdom of the Great Peace (*Taiping tianguo* 太平天國, 1850–1864). Twentieth-century Communist scholars used the examples of the *Scripture of the Great Peace* and the Heavenly Kingdom of the Great Peace to justify the revolutionary potential of the Chinese peasant class. More generally, the Great Peace is a popular theme and title in *yangge* dances, storytelling tales, songs, and other forms of folk festival celebrations.[53] For most Chinese, the notion of the Great Peace represents a cosmological promise of personal, communal, social, and political well-being all at once.

Su's play and Chen's tale couch the Great Peace in CCP terms. They connect it with Party policies that encouraged refugees from other parts of north and northwest China to reclaim wasteland in the Border Region, and work, to invoke the CCP motto, for a life of "ample clothing and abundant food."[54] Both works contrast this new life with the sufferings of the peasantry in the dark past. They phrase the new life with *fanshen* 翻身: in the context of the Yan'an social reforms, the term simply meant that the peasants had rid themselves of poverty and backwardness and had attained a life of prosperity.[55] In this formulaic narrative, the shaman Cheng's demonic disturbances appeared as an assault against the Great Peace and hence against the CCP's heavenly mandate.

The Gendered Narrative of Exorcism

Setting the story in the context of the CCP promise of the Great Peace, the cultural workers followed the same gendered rhetoric of the anti-shaman campaign. Both the play and the tale add several women characters that Feng's story lacks. Su's play begins with a ghost haunting an Old Pan's middle-aged wife, who "sings with religious devotion" and makes daily offerings to "all bodhisattvas to and fro."[56] In Chen's tale, it is Lu the Fourth's elderly mother who first spots three demons outside her house; she recites prayers in fear and requests shaman Cheng's intervention.[57] Here, the religious devotion of the older women predisposed them to the shaman's scam. They are at once the perpetuators and the victims of superstition.

By comparison, young female characters are unable to oppose the shaman, even if they had wanted to. Su's play dedicates a whole act to two such characters

as new settlers and diligent farmers, Yu Jia 余家 and her sister-in-law Kouxiang 寇香. Because they refuse to hire the shaman, the Demoness attacked them: Yu Jia is covered with blood all over her face, and Kouxiang screams to run away. The play does not feature the husband/brother, other than to imply that he is away from home (likely for army or government services), but it has the two women vow to wait for his return to "redress the injustice" on their behalf, or turn to Chief Zhang for justice in the next acts.[58] The play, echoing the campaign rhetoric discussed in earlier chapters, designates young women as vulnerable victims who rely on men and the masculine state power to save them.

Both Su's play and Chen's tale further spell out the same campaign rhetoric through new renditions of the role of the shaman's wife. Feng's story says little about her other than that her husband forced her to make the soles for the Demoness and to stage the scene in which she lies in bed amid a pool of blood. Su's play describes her as "seventeen-year-old, weak and bullied."[59] Chen's tale recounts that her family were refugees fleeing famine. Her father had died on the journey, and she and her mother begged, door to door, until finally finding new lives as weavers for the village cooperative in the Border Region. Her marriage to Cheng was an act of filial piety, to pay back the moral and monetary debt owed to Cheng when his ritual healing presumably had saved the life of her sick mother. The tale further lays out her misery in a scene in which Cheng physically and verbally abuses her. Hitting her hard, he rebukes her for trying to talk him out of his life as a loafer:

> Your worth is cooking me meals and serving me tea! How dare you point fingers at your husband!
> If you chit-chat for one more word, I will make it hard for you to stay alive.
>
> 你只配灶頭燒茶飯, 你敢管你的男子漢!
> 若再咭咭咕咕多說話, 你要活命難上難.[60]

In Chen's retelling, the young wife is a refugee who had worked hard to create a new life for herself, only to fall victim to the abusive and wicked shaman. Building on a few select lines in Feng's news story, both Su and Chen absolve the wife of any guilt in Cheng's evil scheme and render her a weak character subject to his violent treatment.

Alongside these portrayals of innocent female victims, both works attribute to the shaman undesirable masculine qualities. He is an abusive husband, a loafer, and a quack. In Su's play, Cheng announces that he had "[taken

up] banditry at the age of fourteen." His claim "to ascend to heaven and descend to the underworld" reflects no more the will of the shaman's patron gods than it does the audacity of a bandit. With a standard line about outlaws in folk literature, Cheng boasts that "there will be only a scar of the size of a rice-bowl even if my head gets cut off."[61] Yet his audacity betrays the code of honor of *haohan* 好漢—vagabonds and bandits who act righteously—in popular lore.[62] Thus, the shaman is presented as dangerous, dishonorable, and in breach of the very moral codes rural communities live by.

Both works celebrate Chief Zhang for establishing the correct ideological stance against superstition. The real-life figure of Chief Zhang, or Zhang Zhongming 張忠明, was in fact also a famine refugee from Mizhi 米脂 County. He had settled his family near Yan'an in 1931 and joined the revolution in 1934. He served in Panlong District as district chief for four years before taking charge of the Yan'an County police department.[63] Both the play and the tale furnished Chief Zhang with superior wisdom and martial strength and thereby lifted him above and beyond the simple and superstitious tendencies of the rural masses and cadres. Chief Zhang triumphs over the shaman with the perfect combination of *wen* 文 (civil, cultural, and ideological) qualities and *wu* 武 (physical and martial) power that has long defined the masculine ideal in Chinese tradition.[64] In particular, Chen's tale relates that Zhang is known among the locals as "Zhang Qingtian 張青天," meaning "Clear-Sky Zhang," a title alluding to morally upright officialdom and specifically to the Song dynasty official Bao Zheng 包拯 (999–1062).[65] On the opera stage and in popular stories, Bao always appears as a black-faced and fierce-looking hero delivering justice in both this world and the underworld. His signature possession is an imperially bestowed broadsword with which he wards off evil forces and executes criminals.[66] Here Chen strengthens a Communist official's "exorcistic" power by comparing him with Judge Bao, one of the most virile symbols of divine and earthly bureaucracy in Chinese folklore. The message is clear: it was up to masculine heroes like Chief Zhang to rescue female victims and the rural populace at large from the evil grip of shamans and their demons.

Moving Superstition to Center Stage

With the utopian ideal of the Great Peace and the gendered narrative of exorcism as the framework, cultural workers like Su and Chen created

theatrical effects through extensive presentations of superstition. The sensational climax in both Su's play and Chen's tale occurs not at the ending, when the shaman's tricks are predictively revealed, but in the frightening scenes involving the Demoness, especially when she manifests herself in the middle of the storytelling performances sponsored by the shaman Cheng and Lu the Fourth. Feng's news story has only two sentences on the storytelling session, but in the two adaptations the storytelling session is featured in long and exciting episodes.

Su's play dedicates all of Act 4, the centerpiece of the seven-act play, to the storytelling performance at Lu the Fourth's house. It stages the storytelling as part of the shaman's scheme: the bard is hired by the shaman to pacify ghosts and please gods. Lu the Fourth sets up the altar, burns incense, and recites prayers. The bard then erects the tablet of the Jade Emperor on the altar. As he plucks his lute to invite the Jade Emperor to attend, everyone kowtows to the tablet. As soon as he finishes singing his verses, the shaman yells out: "Look, a little person is sitting on the tablet. . . . The Red-Shoed Demoness has come to listen to the story! The Red-Shoed Demoness!" Everyone is terrified and screams out. While the shaman yawns (a sign of entering a trance), dances, and jumps to the altar, Lu the Fourth declares: "Cheng Xiang's god has arrived! Everyone, kneel down and kowtow!" In the voice of the Jade Emperor, the shaman says that the haunting ghost is the Red-Shoed Demoness, and the god promises to exorcise her if the villagers make offerings and contribute a large sum of money to Cheng for the purpose of building a temple for the god. Several rounds of negotiations between the god (the shaman) and the terrified villagers follow, and the act ends with the villagers consenting to ignore official bans on superstition and offer whatever the "Jade Emperor" has requested.[67] The play reenacts the ritual event of storytelling, the shaman's trance, and the apparition of the mysterious Demoness in vivid detail.

While Su's play stages a visual representation, Chen's tale expands the same episode in six pages of oral performance. It recounts a full-fledged invocation ritual, detailing how Cheng and Lu the Fourth set up an altar and burn incense, followed by the bard who invokes all gods in and around the house. The tale even specifies that the bard was shaman Cheng's cousin, and hence his natural accomplice, and he presents the gods with the following lyrics:

> Golden ladle on the dragon platform, we honor the gods with morning incense and evening lamps.

Receiving our offerings, and bless us with good fortunes and Great Peace.
The Sagely Lord [Jade Emperor] is honored in the Hall of Divine Mists,
and the Queen Mother in the Big Dipper Palace.[68]
Lord Guan stands in the Lotus Tent, with Guan Ping and Zhou Cang on
both sides.
The Ox King is honored in the Mountain of Grains, and in the General's
Court the Horse King resides.
Having honored all gods, let us make offerings to the dead; having
honored the village's gods, let us honor the temple gods.
Having honored all gods and spirits around the house, let me start from
the beginning and tell the story present and past.

金斗龍臺供神靈, 早受香煙晚受燈.
受了香煙又受燈, 吉慶無事享太平.
聖主安在靈霄殿, 王母娘娘斗牛宮.
關聖帝君蓮花帳, 關平周倉站兩旁.
牛王安在米糧山, 馬王安在帥府庭.
安把諸神供亡魂, 安了莊神安廟神.
家宅諸神全安定, 我再從頭說古今.[69]

Here Chen's tale copies from the ritual procedure of local storytelling by first calling on the altar gods from the celestial realm, then the gods of the locality, and finally the family gods and spirits. Next, it dramatizes the advent of the Demoness by suddenly silencing the bard's lute and abruptly interrupting the storytelling. The bard then kneels down and cries out: "Gods have come to listen to my story, every one, quickly kowtow for your own safety." The tale then describes the scene, centering on the Demoness and the shaman:

In wafts a sweet breeze, and up curls the incense smoke.
The shaman falls to his knees in the corner: "Look, the Red-Shoed
Demoness is here!"
Heads rise and look upward at a figure hidden behind the yellow paper
offerings.
It looks like a woman, sitting up straight and listening to the story.
No one dares to stare, they kowtow, make vows, and pray for Great Peace.
Cheng Xiang calls for quiet, to hear the Demoness speak,
Everyone stays still, but what she says, none can understand.

忽然一陣香氣過, 香煙裊裊往上升.
跪在屋角里的巫神說: "那不就是紅鞋女妖精!"
眾人抬頭往上看, 黃表後面隱隱約約一個人.
看來是個女人樣, 端坐不動聽書文.
眾人那敢多貪看, 磕頭許願求太平.
程項又吩咐莫作聲, 女妖說話有聲音,
眾人悄悄不敢動, 聽不見女妖說啥情.[70]

Like Su's play, Chen's tale highlights the terror, curiosity, and excitement aroused by the appearance of the Demoness as well as the mixed ritual roles of the shaman and the bard. The phrase "Great Peace" appears twice to indicate the storytelling's exorcistic function for community well-being.

The cultural workers must have learned about the ritual aspects of Shaanbei storytelling from their fieldwork, for what is described in the two adaptations reflect some key features preserved in shamanistic ritual chanting today. Wang Xiangrong, the acclaimed "song king" of Shaanbei we met in Chapter 2, records five songs from the genre of "spiritual-official tunes" (*shenguan diao* 神官調). These are songs that a shaman might perform in a healing ritual, and their titles reflect ritual procedures similar to what we saw in Bai Conghai's confession: "Inviting the Gods" (Qingshen 請神), "Setting Up the Altar" (Shetan 設壇), "Curing an Illness" (Kanbing 看病), "Dispatching Grains and Fodder" (San liangcao 散糧草), and "Sending Off the Gods" (Fashen 發神). The lyrics of "Inviting the Gods," for example, reminds us of the bard's lines in Chen's tale cited above:

Hou—hou ei hei ye hei ye hei ei!
Honor the gods on the left, honor the gods on the right,
In the morning, honor the Sovereign, in the evening, honor the [Celestial] Soldiers,
In the morning, honor the gods with incense smoke, in the evening honor the gods with golden lamps,
In the morning receiving incense smoke, in the evening receiving light
With a golden helmet on the head and body armor,
The gods change their clothes, change their helmet, and get off their horses.

Hou hou hou hou ei hei ye hei,
Jade Emperor, please receive this invitation,

The Most High Old Lord, please receive this invitation,
Queen Mother of the West, please receive this invitation,
Mysterious Lady of the Nine Heavens, please receive this invitation
Four-Eyed Heavenly Deity, please receive this invitation
Pagoda-Holding Heavenly King, please receive this invitation
Twenty-Eight Constellations, please receive this invitation
By the Five Directions and Five Ways, come as soon as possible.

嗬哦哎嘿嘿嘿哎!
左參神是右參神,
早參君王是晚參兵,
早參神神受香煙,
晚參神神受金燈,
早受香煙晚受(的)燈
頂金盔是穿金甲,
神神披衣換(那)甲是來下馬.

嗬嗬嗬嗬哎嘿嘿,
玉皇大帝請知你,
太上老君請知你,
王母娘娘請知你,
九天玄女請知你,
四眼天神請知你,
托塔天王是請知你,
二十八宿請知你,
五方五道早到來.[71]

Once the gods have "got off their horses," the ritual participants would know that they have descended into the shaman's body and that the shaman's séance has begun. Wang's CD recording captures the lively rhythms of "hous" and "heis" that are lost in most textual renditions of Shaanbei storytelling. Nevertheless, the song repeats many of the same ritual vocabularies that the bard uses in Chen's tale, and it also invokes gods in a similar hierarchical order.

Similarities are also preserved in today's storytelling performances. Stephen Jones has offered an image of the contemporary bard's altar, typically adorned with candles, incense, food offerings, yellow paper streamers set in bowls filled with grains, and a piece of "red cloth with the titles of a pantheon

of gods written on it." Depending on the patrons' ritual needs, a bard would invoke different gods to start his storytelling session, and the pantheon could include as many as seventy-two gods.[72] Filling out this visual picture of the storytelling scene, anthropologist Wu Ka-ming records the opening verses sung by a bard in a Shaanbei storytelling session in July 2004, after he had set up the altar and burned incense:

> Oh, I call on you, gods and goddesses, those in the mountain ranges, those in the forest, those by the pool and those in the cosmic palace. Gods and goddesses, please line up in two rows. As the voice of the sanxian [plucked lute]'s voice rises, the Buddha goes to the lotus leaves and the temple of green shade. In the middle of the sea stands the God Guanyin. There are others who stand by the sun, by the cloud and the spirit pavilion. Under the big trees are the Black Tiger God, the guardian of eternal punishment, the Monkey King riding on his magical cloud, the God Erlang hiding in the cave and the Goddess Niangniang riding on a boat. When the dragon raises its head, the God Sanhuang comes. Gods and goddesses, please listen. I call on your names to come down to our place. I pray to you with my spoken wish, and in return I am giving you a story performance.[73]

Su's play and Chen's tale do not present the same local gods as those in contemporary accounts such as Wu's, but they do display similar imitations of the bard's ritual procedure. CCP cultural workers may have used such detailed descriptions to demonstrate how deeply they had delved into local life. As mentioned previously, Chen did fieldwork in the haunted villages and, as a member of the Storytelling Group, worked closely with bards. Su's troupe of thirty-one members moved to Yan'an after receiving complaints from audiences that the music was too Western and the portrayal of local life and especially of the shaman too shallow. With the help of the county government, the troupe gathered first-hand information from villagers, cadres, and indeed Chief Zhang and Lu the Third (Lu San魯三, a cousin of Lu the Fourth). They also interviewed bards and shamans to ensure they could mimic their language and manners on stage.[74] The mass line principle, which required cultural workers to learn from the masses, impelled them to stage superstition vividly and truthfully, albeit presenting a new message.

Party artists and writers may have found it hard to ignore the popular fascination with the enchanting magic of the shaman and bard and the theatrical representations of ghosts and spirits. Both Su's and Chen's adaptations

weave the ritual performance of the shaman and bard into the theatrical horrors caused by the Demoness. Taking advantage of experiences that would have been familiar to villagers, they sought to transform what used to be specialist knowledge of shamans and bards into a public spectacle that glorified the Party. Their audiences could now live through CCP art and literature the same fears, fantasies, curiosities, and heighted emotions they experienced in actual ritual events. Moreover, they could now savor these familiar elements free of the ritual responsibilities in real life.

How successful was Su's and Chen's remaking of Feng's original news story? Su's play became a regular NLWC program and popular show in Yan'an.[75] It created so much interest that on at least one occasion anxious audience members demanded that they be allowed to skip a prearranged mass meeting to make time for the show.[76] Even the Border Region's court record registers the case by the name of the "Red-Shoed Demoness."[77] The story might be published in the GMD controlled city of Chongqing in late 1946, and it appeared in a Hong Kong based newspaper in 1949.[78] During the Civil War, CCP propaganda troupes brought the performance to "liberated areas" in northern China and Manchuria, and even some high school students learned to perform it in public.[79] The show was put on by the Ningxia provincial propaganda troupe as late as 1950.[80] In addition to the sensational title, the play struck audiences with the lively haunting scenes featuring the Demoness. It was so powerful that, in some places, "children and young orderlies do not dare to go to the bathroom" after watching the show.[81] Fear and fantasy about the Demoness carried the popularity of Su's adaptation.

Official media promoted Chen's tale too, but its traction with the public was limited. The *Liberation Daily* published an excerpt from it on September 3, 1945, and the entire story was printed multiple times between 1946 and 1951. However, it must have been difficult for both the bards and the cultural workers to perform Chen's tale: the former could not read, and the latter were mostly southerners who could not sing in the Shaanbei dialect. Perhaps reflecting these limitations, I have found no record that Chen's tale was ever performed.

3. The Same Demoness, a Different Story

While Su's play and Chen's tale had vanished into history by the early 1950s, the bard Han Qixiang kept the Red-Shoed Demoness alive in local

memory.[82] Born to a destitute family, Han had apprenticed to a storytelling master by the age of thirteen and was eking out a living as a bard until the summer of 1944, when he feared that the government would confiscate his three-string pluck lute as a tool of superstition. In order to "adapt himself to the new situation," Han volunteered to work with the Luyi artists, and later joined the Storytelling Group. He learned to perform new stories, and helped Lin Shan and Chen Ming train other bards in the new style.[83] Chen hailed Han as "China's Homer," and up until today, the CCP has upheld him a model of success in reforming both the old art and indeed folk artists.[84]

Han's prestige notwithstanding, the CCP's remaking of the old genres might not have been as successful as the cultural workers claimed. While recognizing Han's exceptional talent in the storytelling craft, Hung argues that Han's acclaimed transformation from an old bard to a new model artist was mostly determined by the political messages he delivered.[85] Jones shows that from the 1940s to the 2000s, the new stories were few and were only performed by a small minority of bards. They could not compete with the popularity of the old stories among the local populace. Some of Han's new stories did become very popular due to official promotion, but Han maintained the old tropes in telling new stories.[86] Traditional tales still constituted about two thirds of Han's entire performance repertoire.[87] In this light, Han's version of the *Red-Shoed Demoness* illustrates a bard's initial experiment in the CCP's reform of the old genres.

The *Red-Shoed Demoness* was one of the first new stories that Han created. In 1959, Han recalled that Luyi writer He Jingzhi 賀敬之 (1924–) read him Feng's news story in August 1944. "As soon as I heard it, [I thought] ah ha, this is the right material for a good story." He then spent eighteen days in the haunted villages in Panlong, and continually revised his story after performing it to the villagers every day. After he returned to Yan'an, he further revised it according to feedback from the Luyi artists.[88] Han started to perform the story in late 1944, around the same time that Su's play was being performed but before Chen's tale was written. While Su's propaganda troupe performed mostly in Yan'an, Han toured in many parts of the Border Region, and the rural folks acclaimed that the story was "so beautifully told."[89] Han's tale thus reached a wider audience than Su's play.

The popularity of Han's tale, however, did not translate into print circulation. Unlike dozens of Han's propaganda stories that have inundated the CCP presses since the late 1940s, no printed version of his *Red-Shoed Demoness* appeared until 2008, in a posthumous collection of his works.[90]

Although Han had solicited input from the Luyi artists, he created the *Red-Shoed Demoness* on his own in the fall of 1944. After joining the Storytelling Group in April 1945, however, he no longer enjoyed the same creative autonomy. The CCP cultural workers began to supervise Han closely to ensure that every single story unfolded on the right political lines. His most popular stories went through multiple revisions over long periods of time before going into print.[91] Chen Ming had chosen to write a new tale on the same subject two months before Han joined the Storytelling Group, suggesting that Chen might not have been content with how Han had told the story and even that he and his fellow cultural workers might not have ever intended for Han's "new" version to be circulated at all.

Substantial elements of superstition were likely the reason that the cultural workers wanted to bypass Han's tale. The 2008 printed version is based on a hand-copied transcription of Han's tale from the 1950s, indicating that Han was still telling the tale to local audiences then.[92] Han's own words in 1959, cited earlier, suggest that Feng's new story resonated with the bard's professional taste for a good ghost story. Since Han was known to change and improvise his tales according to audiences and settings, the surviving version is almost certainly not a verbatim recording of his performances in 1944. Nevertheless, the representations of superstition and female sexuality in Han's narrative still made it drastically different from those of Su and Chen. As we will see next, these representations may have prevented Han's tale from reaching the CCP press.

What Is the Great Peace?

In contrast to Su and Chen, here is how Han opens his story:

> Cow-headed demon, horse-faced demon,
> First demon, second demon, and this place's demons,
> [Do you ask that] are there demons, or are there no demons?
> In the Coiling Dragon, men called up demons.[93]
> The story starts in the year of 1943,[94]
> When demons came to life in the Coiling Dragon,
> The Communist Party caught those demons,
> They caught them alive and locked them away,
> If you don't believe what I just said,

When my story is over you will see,
Listen patiently, think carefully,
Decide for yourself what the demons can be.

牛頭鬼, 馬面鬼,
大鬼二鬼地方鬼,
說有鬼是沒有鬼,
蟠龍渠上人鬧鬼.
故事發生在1943年,
活鬼出在盤龍渠,
共產黨會捉鬼,
捉的鬼坐禁閉,
我說此話你不信,
聽完你就會明白,
慢慢聽你細想想,
你看有鬼沒有鬼.[95]

In this "reformed" performance, Han forgoes the ritual of invocation but still begins the story by introducing the relevant spirits. By asking "are there demons, or are there no demons," he does not expect answers to support the atheist claim that there are no gods and spirits in this world. The questions, and the listing of demons against the Party/exorcist, serve to elicit the audience's anticipation of a ghost story. Most notably, Han makes no comparisons between the old and the new society and builds no connections between the Border Region's social life and the CCP's ideal of the Great Peace. The focal point is the demons.

Han does weave the new political environment of the 1950s into his narrative. Instead of a loafer, for instance, Han makes the shaman, rendered as Chen Xiang 陳巷, a landlord who "harbors resentment against the Communist Party in his heart" and "uses every opportunity to create disturbances"—stock phrases reserved for class enemies in post-1949 propaganda. In the new political setting, however, Han still focuses the story line on the demons. He has the shaman/landlord form an evil triad with Lu the Fourth, a loafer, and Hao Meicui 郝美翠, the shaman's wife, who appoint themselves as the "First Demon, Second Demon, and Third Demon."

Not only does Han name the villains as demons, he also lavishes attention on the lurid spectacles caused by the Demoness, such as the midnight fire, the dead pheasant, and the district chief's misfired gun. He also inserts a new

episode that recounts the story of a Zhang family who hire a *yinyang* ritual master to exorcise the demons:

> *Yinyang* master Ren comes to put his [Zhang's] house in order,
> On the wall he writes several lines of big characters,
> On the door he pastes the Five-Thunder charm,
> The Azure Dragon spreads its claws to frighten demons and monsters,
> The White Tiger opens its jaws to terrify spirits and ghosts,
> Cut paper men and tie-up straw dolls,
> Fill up a half liter of five grains and raw iron,
> [plus] Seven walnuts and seven needles,
> At a crossroad dig up a pit,
> The pit must be dug three feet deep,
> Peach tree branches and cypress figurines,
> Buried under layers of rocks and bricks,
> *Yinyang* master Ren calls up the name of Zhang Zhiming,
> So now you can set your heart at ease,
> I have buried the demons at the crossroads,
> They will never resurface,
> You give me two *dou* of wheat,
> I will guarantee you the Great Peace.
>
> 任陰陽給他來安正,
> 牆上寫了幾行大字,
> 門上貼了五雷符,
> 青龍展爪妖魔怕,
> 白虎張口神鬼愁,
> 剪紙人, 捆草人,
> 五穀生鐵按半升,
> 七顆核桃, 七根針,
> 十字路上挖土坑,
> 土坑挖了三尺深,
> 桃木橛橛, 柏木人,
> 石頭半磚壓幾層,
> 任陰陽叫了聲張志明,
> 從此以後你放心,
> 鬼叫我埋到十字路上,
> 再要出來萬不能,

你給我掙上二斗麥,
我保你永遠得太平.[96]

Recall the use of the straw man, needles, peach tree branches, dough tiger, and metal weapons in a shaman's exorcistic ritual in Chapter 2. From the charm pasted on the door to demons buried at the four-way intersection, Han recounts a wide range of a ritual master's exorcistic methods, all of which fall squarely into the CCP's indictment of superstition. It is through these superstitious practices that master Ren delivers his promise of "Great Peace." The story relates that Ren's ritual did not work, but Han still joins the cultural workers in singing the same praises of the Border Region following Ren's promise:

Our Border Region, what a good place,
Men farm, women weave, and everybody works at a great pace;
Our good time is blessed with ample food and clothing,
We are joyful, for we live in abundance.

咱們邊區好地方,
男耕女織人人忙;
有吃有穿好光景
豐衣足食喜洋洋.[97]

With regard to the promise of the Great Peace, Han's narrative proceeds in a different order from that of either Su or Chen. The latter open their story lines with the Great Peace that has already been established by the CCP and is now disrupted by demonic forces. Han, in contrast, starts with a presentation of demons and assumes that the Great Peace for the Zhang family comes from master Ren's ritual efficacy. Han was surely expected to tell new stories, but his projection of the Great Peace still draws on his familiar trove of ritual exorcism.

Where Is the Woman Victim?

Of all the versions of the story, Han's is the only one that ascribes agency to the shaman's wife, albeit in a negative light. Instead of being called "Cheng's wife," as in Feng's news story, Su's play, and Chen's tale, Han gives her a name

of her own, Hao Meicui, or Hao the Pretty Green Jade—a name exuding vulgar feminine charm. When the shaman bargains with the village heads over his fee for the exorcism, Pretty Green Jade calls out: "Here comes the Demoness!" She then "lies dead, with her mouth wide open, her eyes goggled, and her body as stiff as a stick," as if she is possessed by the Demoness. She further collaborates with her husband on the scheme: the shaman invokes gods and pours a magic potion into Pretty Green Jade's mouth until she wakes up and cries out: "A yaya! It is so terrifying!" She then describes her encounter with the Demoness: "Here she is, in red shirt, green trousers, white socks, and holding a fan. She fans some alive and fans some to death." After the shaman recites incantations and claps several times, Pretty Green Jade says: "She [the Demoness] is gone now!"[98] Han designates Pretty Green Jade, not Cheng, as the medium of the Demoness, and the haunting occurs through the concerted efforts of Cheng, Pretty Green Jade, and, to a lesser degree, Lu the Fourth.

As Han's story develops, Pretty Green Jade evolves into a promiscuous adulteress who is having an affair with Lu the Fourth:

> Lu the Fourth comes to Chen Xiang's house,
> But today Chen Xiang is not home.
> Hao the Pretty Green Jade meets Lu with a happy smile,
> "Second Demon, why have you come?
> Tell me quickly your true intentions."
> Lu the Fourth says, "Mark a red heart on the yellow millet bread,
> Oh Hao the Pretty Green Jade, I love you to death, my darling.
> For three days I have not seen your face,
> Chewing candies I cannot feel the sweet taste."
> Pretty Green Jade says, "The wind moves no dust, willows only sway slightly,
> Even in my dreams I would not have dreamed that you [would] come today.
> Leaves always fall to the bottom of the tree,
> True love means I love you and you love me.
> Second Demon you, and Third Demon me,
> I miss you if you are not here with me."
>
> 鲁四来到陈巷家门,
> 今天陈巷不在家.

郝美翠一见笑吟吟,
“二鬼你来有甚事,
快来对我说真情.”
鲁四说: “黄米馍馍点红心,
郝美翠呀爱死个人.
三天没见你的面,
口嚼冰糖也不甜.”
美翠说: “风尘不动, 杨柳稍摆,
梦也不梦你今天来.
树叶落到树根底,
相好不过我和你.
你二鬼, 我三鬼,
你要不来我想你.”[99]

There is no trace of the submissive and innocent woman victim that we have seen in Su's play, Chen's tale, and the anti-shaman propaganda in general. Pretty Green Jade acts of her own volition. Her sexual promiscuity is paired with her evil conspiracies against the government, each with little influence from her husband. Meanwhile, flirtatious conversations and clownish behavior are materials for mirth—common features of the old performing arts that the cultural workers had vowed to purge. Han fell back on such devices for sheer dramatic effect. His narrative does not share the cultural workers' political rhetoric to save the young rural woman, and the ways in which he makes audiences laugh were obviously inappropriate for the CCP press.

How to Fight Exorcist Battles

To tell a *new* story, Han struggled between the old and the new. He recounted many scenes of popular superstition; after all, bards were ritual masters, and their professional reputation was built on how they freely navigated a rich repertoire of folk religions and customs. But Han was also adept at working around superstition for his own benefit. Recall the extensive elaborations in Su's play and Chen's tale of the storytelling session in which the shaman invokes the Red-Shoed Demoness. Han, in contrast, says very little about this episode. Moreover, while in the other three versions shaman Cheng and Lu the Fourth are the hosts of the storytelling session, in Han's tale the host is a village head—a grassroots CCP official. Thus, Han presents the storytelling

not as a shaman/bard's ritual response to the demonic disturbances but as an officially sponsored communal event disrupted by the Demoness. As a bard himself, Han absolves both the bard and the storytelling in the original story from the shaman's guilt in invoking the Demoness. It is by this clever subtlety that Han defends his profession from the accusation of superstition.

In narrating the exorcistic battles, however, Han strives to balance the new and old at the expense of a logically coherent narrative. For example, he diverts from the main plotline against shaman Cheng with long passages about Pretty Green Jade's love affair and master Ren's ritual exorcism. As a talented bard Han may have not been able to resist the entertainment value of sexual teasers and ritual trivia, each central to the storytelling craft. Yet he must have been aware of the limits on using such materials in the new political environment. In the next parts of the story, Han drops the storyline of the love affair and the *yinyang* master altogether and reconnects the Zhang family with the demonic disturbances: the family wakes up to strange coughs emanating from the chimney during a midnight storm. They are so frightened that they flee their home immediately, only to fall off a cliff and die.[100] Each of these individual episodes has its own dramatic merit, but Han does not connect them into a coherent narrative.

The death of the Zhang family brings Chief Zhang into the story, but again Han jumps from one sensational episode to another without providing clear, logical links between them. He escalates the scale of the exorcistic battle, with Chief Zhang commanding as many as one hundred and fifty soldiers instead of the four soldiers in the other three versions of the same story. Han has the Chief shrewdly divide his men into three groups, with each taking a different route to surround the haunted villages, while he himself heads a team of twenty soldiers to the village where the Zhang family has died. This way, Han portrays Chief Zhang not in the traditional style of official exorcist but rather as a military commander of the type commonly found in CCP combat stories, forgoing traditional tropes to align his hero with the new standards.

But does Chief Zhang really need so many soldiers to tackle one single shaman? Han switches from military fanfare to the bizarre in the next part, in which the chief discovers that the strange coughing does not come from the Demoness but from a big toad choking on a piece of hard salt! No other versions mention this discovery. The closest case would be the popular story discussed in section 1 above, about the female hairy ghost-spirit who haunted villagers with the sound of toad croaks back in the 1910s. Or perhaps the

local people always linked demonic occurrences with toad croaks? In either case, such a discovery explains nothing about the shaman's fabrication of the Demoness. Nor does it support Chief Zhang's wisdom and military might. Here Han seems to cater to the audience's curiosity for the bizarre, seemingly oblivious to both a realistic story line and the expected political effect.

Finally, Han deploys familiar elements of superstition to describe the battle between the shaman and Chief Zhang. Instead of focusing on Chief Zhang, Han dedicates a long passage to the shaman's ritual, detailing how a villager burns incense and paper, and how the shaman enters a trance, speaks in the voice of the Jade Emperor, and blames the anti-superstition campaign as the real cause of the demonic disturbances. Before he briefly pronounces Chief Zhang's victory, Han indulges the audience and perhaps himself in the ritual spectacle of the shaman. Superstition thus underlies his narrative strength.

Han's story lingers in the local memory ultimately because Han had told a good ghost story that appealed to his local audience. Yet the story's long absence from the official press suggests that Han did not tell a *new* story by CCP standards. He does end the story with four lines touting the Party's "new ideas" and urging people to give up "beliefs in ghosts and spirits." But with the sexual banter, blunt profanities, and colorful illustrations of a wide range of superstitious practices throughout the tale, such an ending is no more than mere lip service to the Party's anti-superstition messages. Han's first experiment with the new story thus failed and succeeded at the same time, displaying the harm and charm of superstition.

With the central theme of ghost exorcism, Party journalist Feng Senling's news story strayed from the CCP's dominant campaign rhetoric that promoted public health in opposition to shaman healers. Nevertheless, the sensational name and image of the "Red-Shoed Demoness" inspired creative enthusiasm among Yan'an's artists. For these artists, the Demoness was a necessary evil in their construction of a new social and cosmological order for the Great Peace under CCP leadership. Yet in order to make an impact on the rural masses, their works remained entangled with traditional worldviews, the language of ritual exorcism, and gender-laden icons of heroes and villains from folk literature. They *performed* superstition to eradicate superstition based on their understanding that the old art forms still held sway among the population at large. For the bard Han Qixiang, in contrast, the Demoness

meant nothing but a good ghost story. She provided a plot framework that could be filled in with entertaining episodes of demonic disturbances, sexual banter, and ritual exorcisms. Han did not care to situate the Demoness against the Communist utopian "heaven," and his strong-willed villainess defied the image of woman victims in Party rhetoric. Even with Han's ostensible agreement to reform the old storytelling genre, sex and superstition found their way back into his new story.

The popularity of the *Red-Shoed Demoness*, however, was short-lived. In 1949, the heavy use of "superstitious" materials in Communist anti-superstition propaganda provoked severe criticism by higher level literary cadres. Using Su's play as a negative example, a Party newspaper article complained that many anti-superstition plays contained too many seemingly realistic portrayals of "seeing ghosts in broad daylight and [watching] demons wreaking havoc." The revelation of the shamanistic scams at the end of these stories, meanwhile, were as short and useless as "a mouse's tail."[101] Such criticism occurred shortly after the PRC was founded in October 1949 and a new round of cultural reforms was forthcoming. As the Party introduced national bans on folk literature and performing arts containing "superstition," the Red-Shoed Demoness soon faded into obscurity.

6

An Enemy to Rise or an Enemy to Fall

The anti-shaman campaign not only inspired multiple forms of performing arts such as storytelling and dramas. It also provided rich materials for *Uncle Gao* (*Gao Ganda* 高乾大), a novel created in the spirit of *Mao's Talks* by the Yan'an-based writer Ouyang Shan 歐陽山 (1908–2000). In twenty-four chapters, Ouyang synthesized many anti-shaman news stories from the *Liberation Daily* into a fictional account about the struggles between a peasant hero called Uncle Gao and a shaman villain named Hao the Fourth (Hao Si'er 郝四兒). Uncle Gao's final triumph signified the success of the anti-shaman campaign for Yan'an's cooperative movement and for the prospect of a new peasant life under CCP leadership.

Compared to traditional storytelling and dramas, which were often quickly and collaboratively produced for immediate propaganda use, novels are generally time-consuming endeavors by individual authors. Ouyang began planning the novel in late 1944, and it took more than a year for him to finish it in early 1946. Primitive printing conditions in Yan'an and the subsequent Civil War further delayed publication. The novel did not reach the CCP press until 1947, after the Communist forces had already withdrawn from Yan'an and all of CCP's social programs had been subsequently cut short. The CCP published multiple editions of *Uncle Gao* between 1948 and 1952, and in 1948 the Party made it a "must read" assignment for all cadres at the county level and above.[1] Yet, from the late 1940s to the 1970s, *Uncle Gao*'s popularity fluctuated with the Party's rural economic policies, and it attracted little attention beyond a small Communist literary circle. Ouyang Shan himself admitted in 1960 that the novel's subject matter on the cooperatives had long since become dated.[2] The novel gained new recognition after 1979, when the post-Mao reforms moved the rural economy back onto the Party's agenda. Still, the novel remains little known in China and attracts only moderate scholarly attention to this day.[3]

It is, nonetheless, precisely the novel's lack of attention and fame that illustrates the significance of the Yan'an anti-shaman campaign to the Communist revolution. If performing the *Red-Shoed Demoness* testifies to the enchanting power of superstition, the obscure history of *Uncle Gao* reveals propaganda workers' perplexities with the anti-superstition drive as the CCP transitioned from Yan'an-centered base areas to the national theater of the Civil War. Many like Ouyang eagerly followed *Mao's Talks* to learn how to write in the language of the masses and for the masses. However, other than direct forms of oral and visual art, how could they efficiently propagate anti-superstition sentiment? Should they commit their works to promoting wartime social-economic incentives, or should they adapt to the new political contingencies after 1946, when the CCP waged a class war against the landlords as the GMD's proxies? In this time of transition, to what extent could shamans and "feudal superstition" serve as a useful enemy in the Communist discourse of revolution?

This chapter studies how one propaganda worker worked within these limits to make shamans and rural superstition a valid subject for the rural revolution. I start with a discussion of Ouyang's literary career, and his writing of *Uncle Gao* in the social and political context of Yan'an from 1942 to 1944 (Sections 1 and 2). I then examine how, following the gendered rhetoric of the anti-shaman campaign, Ouyang established Uncle Gao as a new masculine model for the peasants in their liberation from superstition (Sections 3 and 4). Finally, I analyze the fluctuating fate of *Uncle Gao* in the face of changing political realities over time (Section 5). I make two arguments. First, Ouyang's personal background, as well as the requisites of the Yan'an campaign, made it unlikely that his novel would truly connect with local society. Second, the clash between the peasant hero and the shaman villains in Ouyang's novel mattered too little and too late amid the new political reality after 1946. Party propaganda would develop a new gendered rhetoric of salvation for Chinese peasants (as we will see in Chapter 8), but it moved on without a renewed focus on the problem of shamans in rural society.

1. Ouyang Shan and His New Life in Yan'an

Ouyang Shan was born in 1908 to a poor farming family in Hubei Province. Soon after his birth he was sold into the Yang household and renamed Yang Fengqi 楊鳳岐. After many moves resulting from his adoptive father's

employment, his adoptive mother took the seven-year-old Fengqi back to the Yang family's hometown of Guangzhou 廣州. There Fengqi spent his formative years as the family struggled with modest financial means. At middle school he was drawn to May Fourth literature and began to publish short stories and novels in the mid-1920s. Later he moved to Shanghai, where he adopted Ouyang Shan as his pen name, became a member of the League of Left-Wing Writers in 1933, and joined the Communist Party in 1938. He arrived in Yan'an in 1941 and returned to Guangzhou after the founding of the PRC on October 1, 1949. In Guangzhou he held leading positions in official literary organizations, and remained there until the end of his life. He is better known for *Three-Family Lane* (*Sanjiaxiang* 三家巷), a novel published in 1958, and for the subsequent revolutionary romance series of *A Romantic Generation* (*Yidai fengliu* 一代風流). His familiarity with homegrown urban culture, such as the setting of Guangzhou in *Three-Family Lane*, contributed greatly to his literary success.[4]

Before his arrival in Yan'an, Ouyang was known as "a Cantonese writer" who wrote in "Europeanized style."[5] In order to promote a new kind of literature against the use of classical Chinese, he experimented with his native Cantonese dialect for the less educated, and with Europeanized language and syntax for the educated youth and intellectuals.[6] In Shanghai, in light of the Japanese invasion, he joined Lu Xun and other leftists in promoting the "popular literature for the national revolutionary war." When he arrived in Chongqing in 1939, he turned to Soviet-style "new socialism" to write "popular fiction" (*dazhong xiaoshuo* 大众小说) in vernacular Mandarin. To mobilize the masses for the war of resistance, he created a wide range of fictional characters drawn from the lower classes.[7]

Despite his longtime commitment to a popular literature both *of* and *for* the masses, Ouyang still experienced a culture shock upon his arrival in Yan'an in early 1941. For the first time, he had left behind the familiar urban cultures of the south and tried to embrace the different rural environment in the northwest.[8] An essay Ouyang published in the *Liberation Daily* on May 19, 1941, indicates that many like him in Yan'an were frustrated with their literary activities: "Why after we have learned Marxist theories, are we unable to produce any literary works?"[9] As a fervent Marxist, he offered a solution by urging a further combination of Marxist theories with literary skills. Yet the solution did not help his own writing; his long trajectory of prolific fiction writing came to a halt somewhere between 1941 and 1943, during which he wrote only a few short essays.

Ouyang's struggle must have intensified during the Rectification Movement of 1942–44, especially after he had three personal conversations with Mao and attended the sessions in which Mao delivered *Mao's Talks* in May 1942.[10] Writer Liu Baiyu 劉白羽 (1916–2005) recalled that while in Yan'an, he and Ouyang both felt that "there was a great gap between our thoughts and Comrade Mao Zedong's later viewpoints."[11] Ouyang himself reflected that he had to make a difficult choice: "Should I keep my original style so that [the new peasants and peasant cadres] would be unable to accept my works? Or should I change my own style to make my works as popular as possible among them?"[12] He of course chose the latter, but admitted that the change was painful and difficult.

Mao's personal recognition must have been an important catalyst for Ouyang's drive to write a new kind of "popular fiction" under the direction set by *Mao's Talks*. On June 30, 1944, he published a short news report in the *Liberation Daily* about an elderly peasant woman who had gained a new life by participating in the cooperative production of weaving. The report, entitled "Living in the New Society," appears side by side with another essay by Ding Ling on a model cooperative director in Jingbian 靖邊 County. Both Ouyang and Ding were wrestling with finding a new path to write at the Party's direction. Neither author thought much of their essay, which they submitted as routine "reflections" after attending a conference honoring labor heroes in the cooperative movement.[13] To their surprise, the essays excited Mao, who read them "in one breath" overnight, immediately wrote a letter to congratulate the two authors on their "new writing style," and invited both to dinner the next day.[14]

There were good reasons why these two short essays excited Mao. By 1941, the CCP had gained little success in organizing village residents into state-run cooperatives. In May 1941, the government established a different model of "people-managed cooperative" with Yan'an's South District Cooperative (Nanqu hezuoshe 南區合作社).[15] From September 1942 the Party promoted this "people-managed" model throughout the Border Region. Instead of total state control, the CCP now encouraged village residents to become shareholders of cooperatives and urged the people-owned cooperatives to run local socioeconomic life, ranging from trade, production, and transportation, to education, health, and tax collection.[16] In December 1942, Mao announced that: "The road of the South District Cooperative is the road of the Border Region's cooperatives."[17] The director of the South District Cooperative, Liu Jianzhang 劉建章 (1912–1958), was named a labor hero

and awarded a banner personally inscribed by Mao.[18] As the cooperative movement culminated in 1943–44, Ouyang's and Ding's essays rightly tapped into Mao's political pulse.

Mao's surprising recognition encouraged Ouyang to undertake more ambitious endeavors. In August 1944, Ouyang and his newlywed wife Yu Xun 虞迅 joined the South District Cooperative, where he worked as an associate accountant and participated in cooperative routines for a year.[19] Here he resumed his fiction writing, vowing to tell stories about real-life figures in rural society. *Uncle Gao* thus represents a native Cantonese writer's daring experiment with an unfamiliar local language in a new local culture. It marked a major step that Ouyang took along Mao's new literary path.

2. Fact and Fiction

To efficiently propagate Party policies, Ouyang weaves fiction with fact, in the form of what literary scholars call "fictionalized reportage literature," which became common in CCP literature after the Yan'an period.[20] He sets the novel's timeline between August 1941 and December 1942, roughly from the Party's initial recognitions of the South District Cooperative to Mao's endorsement of the cooperative. To keep pace with the Party's recent socioeconomic initiatives, however, Ouyang sidelines the widely publicized operations that had made the South District Cooperative a model in these earlier years, such as its credit loan programs, its salt transport teams, its textile factory and workshops, and its successful grain tax payment plan.[21] Instead, he anachronistically places the anti-shaman and public health campaigns of 1944–45 into this earlier timeframe. In this regard he followed the Party's call in June 1944, when, in an all-cooperative conference, the government demanded that all cooperatives establish medicine and health facilities. Director Liu of the South District Cooperative, who had already taken the lead on these establishments, now pledged to do more.[22] Subsequently, Ouyang reframes the South District Cooperative of his own time into an earlier fictional time, in ways that were historically inaccurate but politically imperative.

Ouyang also mixes fiction and fact in creating his characters. He models Uncle Gao on the real-life hero of Director Liu. Like Liu as he is portrayed in the CCP press, Uncle Gao is a grassroots Party member who works selflessly for the cooperative movement and eventually leads the villagers to a

prosperous life. Moreover, Uncle Gao fends off the dogmatic and bureaucratic practices of the county chief and the previous cooperative director, and interacts with a range of village shareholders. Some of these characters can be traced to prototypes whom Ouyang encountered in the South District Cooperative.[23]

Real-life experience, however, did not provide Ouyang any material for his shaman characters. Throughout the novel, the single source for all his shaman characters is the *Liberation Daily*. He picked real names of infamous shamans from the news stories, mixed and matched them with fictional village names, and assigned them different roles. Among them are Yang Hanzhu from Gorge Palm Village, Bai Conghai from Leopard Gorge, Cheng Xiang from Old Caves Hamlet, Zheng Shengrong 鄭生榮 from Green Dragon Loop, Tian Dengkui 田登奎 from Loess Hills of Locus Trees, and Wang Junkui 王俊奎 from Southern Ridge.[24] Readers should be familiar with the first three names from previous chapters: Yang Hanzhu (Chapter 2 and 3), Bai Conghai (Chapter 2), and Cheng Xiang (Chapter 5). The name of the major shaman villain in the novel, Hao the Fourth, is an echo of Lu the Fourth, the accomplice of Cheng Xiang. Ouyang thus musters an army of shamans from the *Liberation Daily* for his fictionalized reportage.

In addition to adopting the names of shamans, Ouyang uses major campaign stories as his thematic linchpin and for plot highlights. Uncle Gao's first confrontation with the shamans is literally a retelling of Yang Hanzhu's trial as reported in Mu Qing's news story that ushered in the anti-shaman campaign. Ouyang keeps the same twenty-six-year-old pregnant Woman Bai, only changing her marital family's name from Chang to Luo. The shaman villain is changed from Yang Hanzhu to the younger Hao the Fourth. Like Yang, Hao persuades the Luo family to reject the medical treatment by a state doctor. Ouyang also follows the campaign rhetoric of persecution: Hao tortures Woman Bai by flogging and burning her, injecting needles into her nostrils, and stripping her naked—that is, he includes the details of ritual torment we saw in journalist Mu's account. The shaman's brutal murder of the young woman serves as a major catalyst for Uncle Gao's determination to establish a medical cooperative. It sets the stage for the later conflicts in the novel.

News stories not only helped Ouyang to introduce the major theme and conflicts in the novel; they also carry the novel all the way to its climax. In the last part of the novel, Hao steps into the role of Cheng Xiang—the shaman who fabricated the "Red-Shoed Demoness" in Feng's news report. Hao

creates the horrifying female ghost so that he and his shaman followers can make a fortune by offering exorcistic services to the panic-stricken villagers. Ouyang retains all the key "haunting" details of Feng's news story, from ghost screams, mud throwing, disturbed domestic animals and livestock, blood on doors and windows, and finally, the footprints of an invisible demoness. Like journalist Feng, Ouyang also documents Uncle Gao's and other cadres' initial fears and failures to catch the demon.[25] In including some of the key features of the shamanic rituals as described in the *Liberation Daily*, Ouyang fuses fiction writing with Party journalism that is reported as fact.

Ouyang perhaps hoped that the news reports would help him dramatize the story line as authentic local experiences. The Party newspaper's reports, however, by no means reflected Ouyang's own real-life experiences with shamans and other ritual specialists whom he may have personally encountered during a year's stay at the South District Cooperative. Even if all ritual specialists in the South District had managed to fly under the government's radar in 1944, Ouyang must have known at least one who had received direct attention in the propaganda about Director Liu Jianzhang: a *yinyang* master by the name of Mr. Dong.

Dong appears in a *Liberation Daily* news story extolling Director Liu's model medical cooperative on June 16, 1944. The story was later republished in an officially issued booklet honoring models in medicine and health in October 1944. It tells how Director Liu had collaborated with Dong in running a medical cooperative under the umbrella of the South District Cooperative. Dong practiced "traditional medicine" in the cooperative, while Liu educated him about the harms caused by *yinyang* masters and shamans. Liu deliberately stocked and sold incense, paper money, and other ritual merchandises in the cooperative so that people would learn about the contrasting benefit of medicines and the uselessness of gods and spirits when they came to purchase these "superstition products." Liu also allowed Dong to heed people's "superstitious requests" in the form of a "superstition share" (*mixin rugu* 迷信入股) in which Dong contributed a share of whatever he earned from his "superstitious" services to the medical cooperative.[26] Once again, we see the official distinction between medicine (doctors) and charlatanry (shamans and folk healers) being blurred in practice, with the pragmatic Liu circumscribing a space for folk healers at the cooperative. In spite of the Party's anti-shaman drive, grassroots cadres often accommodated, rather than simply eradicated, "superstitious" practices.

Given Ouyang's intense attention to both Director Liu and Party media, he must have known about Liu's cooperation with Dong. But why did he omit this piece of very relevant information when he wrote about Liu's achievements in medical cooperative? Why did he turn to the much more critical stories of shamans in the Party newspaper instead? What new elements did he add to these news stories in the novel? The following sections will demonstrate that, contrary to Liu's pragmatic approach to superstition, Ouyang envisioned no space for shamans and folk healers in a "people-managed" medical cooperative in his novel. Neither did he attempt to rehabilitate them through confession meetings or public trials. The compromise between old and new that, in reality, the CCP were forced to reach, could be washed out in fiction, even fiction that relied on shamanic practices for its drama.

3. Uncle Gao's Rural World: The Hero and the Villain

The main story line of the novel revolves around Uncle Gao's resolution to establish a new "people-managed" medical cooperative when the existing cooperative has failed under the bureaucratic leadership and dogmatic management of Ren Changyou 任長有, a local cadre dispatched from above. Uncle Gao's initiative meets with enthusiastic responses from many villagers and quickly secures investment shares from a local businessman. However, the initiative is not supported by Ren, a character whom Ouyang designed to reflect the Border Region's early failure with the state-controlled cooperatives. Gao's plan also encounters fierce opposition from a shaman named Hao the Fourth. Representing the Party's shift to the people-managed cooperatives in 1942, Uncle Gao triumphs over Ren halfway into the novel, with Ren's sudden death in Chapter 12. Gao's battles with the shaman are more enduring, running through the twenty-four chapters of the novel from beginning to end. Echoing the ongoing anti-shaman and public health campaigns at the time of his writing, Ouyang perceived shamans and superstitions as a major obstacle of the CCP rural revolution.

Ouyang casts the confrontation between Uncle Gao and the shaman Hao in masculine terms. He introduces Hao thus: "A young man in his twenties, [Hao] was short, slim, with pale and delicate skin, thin eyelids, thin lips, tiny nose, and a crafty look."[27] All the adjectives point to Hao's lack of physical strength and masculine vigor in contrast to what would characterize a healthy and capable young peasant laborer. Ouyang also hints at Hao's moral

weakness, describing how Hao dresses himself in peasant clothes but "looks as a shopkeeper": the former is supposed to be honest and the latter crafty.[28] Like the propaganda workers we met in previous chapters, Ouyang depicts young shamans as loafers who refuse to farm for a decent living.

Ouyang introduces Uncle Gao as the exact opposite of Hao:

> Squatting on the floor was a big, sun-tanned man of forty-five or so. He had a sort of oblong face, a lopsided mouth and chin and a moustache. . . . He was large-boned, with muscular hands and legs. Despite the wrinkles on his face he did not look his age, and his eyes shone like jewels.[29]

Uncle Gao's physical features clearly indicate the manliness of someone who tills the land. His age turns out to be a great advantage, too, for he is perceptive and wise without age hampering his physical virility. Furthermore, contrary to the news reports, in which state power punishes shamans in public trials and at mass meetings, Uncle Gao's confrontations with Hao, as we will see, is always man to man. Ouyang perceives masculine prowess as the peasant's way to fight and hence the authentic expression of a peasant hero.

Just as Gao's physical struggles with Hao will indicate, Ouyang does not create Uncle Gao as a perfect hero: "For the most part he was a Communist, but he was also still somewhat of a peasant."[30] As literary scholar Tina Mai Chen argues, peasants in the Maoist discourse of revolution are a collective entity possessing different modes of existence, "as oppressed beings, as liberating agents with emerging consciousness, and as fully formed embodiments of revolutionary transformation."[31] Uncle Gao is on his way to reaching full revolutionary transformation in this political framework of existences. He surely displays the voluntary consciousness for the revolution. Yet, he needs to overcome remnants of the "feudal mind" particular to the peasant class in order to fully realize his revolutionary potential.

For Ouyang, Uncle Gao's revolutionary potential is hampered by his fear of gods and spirits. The first clash between Uncle Gao and Hao occurs when Hao blames Woman Bai's death on the cooperative's doctor. Gao flies into a wild rage, launching at the shaman and slapping his face twice. The spectacle draws a large crowd, and Gao has the upper hand until, reeling from the blows, Hao reaches for his three-pronged broadsword, dances, and issues personal threats to Gao in the name of his patron god: "I will take his soul, I will strike him with a plague, and I will wipe out his entire family and village!"[32] Gao backs off, acknowledging that: "I can fight with men . . . but

I can't struggle against gods!" He is actually stricken with fear: "his backbone started to ache, his whole body felt limp, and his legs were trembling."[33] Uncle Gao's fear of the gods undermines his masculine valor, and he cannot defeat the shaman in the way, for instance, the Party-state trial had defeated Yang.

Uncle Gao succumbs to superstition a second time when confronted with Hao's Red-Shoed Demoness. Gao connects the demoness with a dead green snake discovered near her footprints. Since Gao had saved a green snake three months earlier, he believes that the snake is his patron spirit—a plot again borrowed from an anti-shaman news story.[34] The cunning Hao again exploits Gao's superstition to attack the medical cooperative. He sends his shaman followers to spread a rumor that the death of the green "dragon" foretells more demonic disturbances and imminent disasters. People begin to flee their homes, and Uncle Gao's cooperative is on the verge of collapse.[35]

It is the Party, represented by the county secretary Zhao, that helps Uncle Gao realize his final revolutionary transformation. Zhao opposes to the old-style cooperatives and supports Gao's "people-managed" medical cooperative. He has given Gao frequent ideological lessons throughout the novel, and in the last chapters, he educates Uncle Gao with a speech at a meeting of county cadres:

> Comrade Gao ought to remember that we Marxists are materialists and don't believe in gods. All this superstitious stuff about ghosts and spirits, fate and omens is just nonsense. It is false. It is idealism. . . . We say that everything in this world is made by man, and is the expression of the struggle of the classes. Spirits and ghosts and all such things were what the rulers in feudal society used to dope the people with, in order to confuse them. Their aim was to deceive the masses and hold them down, so that they would not get ideas about rebelling, but would, in fact, lose their own will to rebel.[36]

Here Ouyang uses the standard Communist rhetoric of materialism and class struggle to liberate Uncle Gao from his "feudal thoughts" and "peasant consciousness." Only after this ideological teaching does Uncle Gao complete his revolutionary transformation and go on to confront Hao and his spiritual power again.

Gao's final battle with Hao features an intense fistfight, though this time Uncle Gao is awakened from his superstitious slumber by Party secretary Zhao. In this scene, Ouyang reenacts the plot of Feng's news story of the Red-Shoed Demoness, but he changes the ending. Instead of the shaman's capture

being a concerted group effort led by Chief Zhang, as it is in all other versions of the Demoness story in the foregoing chapter, Uncle Gao catches Hao by himself, on the very spot where Hao had feigned the haunting. In the two pages that Ouyang dedicates to the scene:

> They grappled with each other, rolling over and over on the rough ground. Their faces bloody, their clothes torn, they fought desperately in a cloud of dust and pebbles, always moving downhill over nettles and ditches, tree stumps and crops. Nothing was barred: biting, punching, kicking, and strangling.[37]

The fight ends when both men falling off a cliff. Hao dies. Uncle Gao survives, and goes on to receive the honor of labor hero, with recognition from the Party and Mao. Again, Ouyang makes physical strength and masculine valor a defining element in the struggle between peasant hero and shaman villain, and the former cannot win without having cleansed himself from the "feudal thoughts" and "peasant consciousness."

Through Uncle Gao's transformation, Ouyang demonstrates that feudal superstition was a chief enemy in Yan'an's rural revolution. It was an enemy that the Party had to fight within, by transforming the "feudal thoughts" of local cadres and grassroots Party members like Uncle Gao, and through them, the peasant population at large (see next section). In the meantime, the Party relied on the same peasant cadres and Party members to fight the enemy without, namely, shamans and all purveyors of feudal superstition.

Other than featuring Hao's battles with Uncle Gao, Ouyang gathers individual shamans named in the *Liberation Daily* news reports as loafers in Hao's entourage. Hao organizes these men—for they are all men, just as in the campaign stories—into an oppositional force against Uncle Gao's medical cooperative. The shamans enter into a pact, pledging to reject any villager who has sought help from Gao's cooperative. They spread the word that Gao will soon be punished with death by Hao's patron god, that the building in which the medical cooperative is housed will soon burn down, and that a child has been killed by the cooperative doctor with a long needle. They announce that "if everything with the cooperative goes well, we shamans, spiritual officials, ritual masters, and dream diviners will all have to go to jail, or we will all have to be forced to work the wastelands up in the mountains. We will all have to die!"[38] In Ouyang's account, what happens between the shamans and Gao's cooperative is a life-and-death struggle.

Indeed, this united force of shamans soon moves from resisting Gao's medical cooperative into a larger scheme of resisting the entire cooperative movement, the Great Production Drive, and the New Society. They instigate the villagers to withdraw their cooperative shares and incite popular resentment against the state's collection of grain taxes. Their destructive potential is well encapsulated in one scene where, after Hao and his shaman followers have failed several of their conspiracies against the cooperative, Hao curses Uncle Gao and his supporters with gnashing teeth, "You are the New Society, so you are all my enemies!"[39] To counter this destructive force, Uncle Gao refuses to accept Hao's pleading for his life in their final brawl. Just before they teeter off the cliff, Gao denounces Hao as a "counterrevolutionary," a term reserved for class enemies. Their fistfights stand for the ultimate conflict between heroes and villains in Ouyang's vision of the rural revolution.

4. Uncle Gao's Rural World: The Saved and the Enlightened

A second narrative line that complements the clashes between Gao's cooperative and the shamans is the love triangle among three characters: Shaman Hao, Uncle Gao's son Gao Shuan'er 高拴兒, and Ren Guihua 任桂花, the daughter of Ren Changyou—the director of the failed cooperative. Gao Shuan'er is a contrasting parallel to shaman Hao. Both men are in their twenties, unhappy with the hardship of farming, and eager to leave poverty behind. Both reject the cooperative: for Hao it destroys his healing business; for Shuan'er it takes his father away from attending to their own family business. The two men also develop a romantic interest in the same woman, Guihua. Guihua was betrothed to Shuan'er at a very young age, and the two are in love. Because the Gao family is poor, however, Guihua's father does not permit the Gaos to complete the marriage, and to Shuan'er and Guihua's great disappointment, he later rescinds the betrothal contract with the Gaos and accepts a lucrative marriage proposal from Hao. Ren's decision was common in contemporary Shaanbei, where the shortage of young marriageable women drove up the bride price and encouraged fathers to break former contracts in favor of higher-paying suitors.[40] Nevertheless, Ouyang's concern here is not marriage reform. Instead, he connects the marriage issue with rural poverty, as a background to promote the cooperative movement.

Ouyang's intention in bringing Uncle Gao into the love triangle drama is to make the cooperative movement a key to bringing not only economic prosperity but also happy family life to rural folks. As a peasant hero, Uncle Gao undertakes the mission to enlighten the peasants on behalf of the Party. His role fits a common pattern of hero-making in Soviet socialist realism, which often used the hierarchical relationship between father and son to represents how revolutionary vanguards helped the masses to raise their political consciousness in the myth of revolution.[41] Notably, in Shaanbei dialect, *Ganda* or *Uncle*, is a common appellation for all fatherly figures in one's family and social circles. Ouyang deliberately chooses this local term for his hero, so that Uncle Gao becomes symbolic father to rescue rural women like Guihua from the oppression of shamans and to free young peasants like Shuan'er from "peasant consciousness."

Like the educated cultural workers discussed in previous chapters, Ouyang designates young rural women as vulnerable prey for shamans. It was by no means Ouyang's casual design that Ren Changyou abruptly died of binge drinking on the very night of his daughter' wedding with the shaman Hao. The death removes a bureaucratic obstacle for Uncle Gao to run the new "people-managed cooperative." Moreover, it transfers the innocent Guihua to the fatherly protection of Uncle Gao, who "always adores her and treats her as his daughter [in-law]."[42] While enduring marital misery with Hao, Guihua runs to Uncle Gao "like a child who has been bullied finally sees her parents."[43] Her subsequent accusation against Hao repeats the standard CCP diatribe against shamans:

> Save me, Uncle Gao! I can't live like this! . . . He [Hao]'s a reckless and cruel loafer, he doesn't even lift a finger to grow crops, and he only goofs around invoking spirits and ghosts. He spends every penny he swindles on smoking opium, gambling, drinking, and pigging out, and there is nothing evil he will not do! It is only a month since I was married to him, and he has already beaten me five times. I say one word wrong he would beat me, and I take one step wrong, he would beat me again![44]

In Guihua's tearful testimony, Hao is a fraud, a loafer, and a sadistic husband, much like Cheng Xiang in the retellings of the *Red-Shoed Demoness*. Her life depends on four men: Ren Changyou and Hao, who are responsible for the tragic marriage, and Uncle Gao and Shuan'er, who are her only hope to be

freed from such a marriage. Like Woman Bai or "Cheng Xiang's wife" in Su's *yangge* play and Chen's *shuoshu* tale, Guihua is a victim of the old patriarchal power in need of salvation.

Running parallel with the saving power of father over daughter, the father-son relationship is also emblematic of the Party agenda to enlighten the rural masses. For Ouyang, father and son represent two different paths to rural prosperity: Uncle Gao is a Party-designated peasant leader who sacrifices his own family's interests for the public good, while his son prioritizes the well-being of his family. In a conversation that lasts all night, Uncle Gao lectures his son by placing the concrete realities of their own life into the framework of revolution. The ultimate goal of the revolution, the father explains, is to eliminate poverty and backwardness, and this revolution "is much more difficult than the revolution against the warlords, corrupted officials, and landlords."[45] The father further tackles his son's individualism by invoking ideas about benevolent Party leadership and collectivism: "Chairman Mao . . . always comes forward in times of calamity and saves us. . . . You can't fight poverty and backwardness as individuals!"[46] The only way for everyone to eliminate poverty is to join the cooperative, and only after everyone has joined the cooperative would the Gao family also escape poverty.

Through Uncle Gao's words, Ouyang reiterates the CCP promise of rural prosperity in the mid-1940s. He pays tribute to the rhetoric of class struggle against imperialists, warlords, and landlords, but as the conversation cited above illustrates, the Party priority now was to help peasants attain wealth and prosperity. The purpose of the cooperative movement, like the ongoing anti-shaman and public health campaigns, was to contribute to the prospect of rural prosperity encapsulated by the two most quoted mottos in Party media: "ample clothing and abundant food" and "numerous in people and prosperous in properties."

It is only in terms of getting rid of poverty and backwardness that the son begins to understand his father's sacrifices and grasps the importance of the cooperative. That night:

> He forgot about all his complaints [about Uncle Gao], he forgot his fear of Hao the Fourth, and he even put aside his feelings for Guihua. That night, he slept by his father's side. He felt that his father was a giant, just like the Four Guardian Gods of the temple, and he himself was as little as a newborn baby.[47]

Shuan'er represents those young peasant men caught between revolutionary change and backward rural tradition. Uncle Gao's dedication and sacrifice are as much for the people as for his own son, or, to be more exact, for the people *as his own son*. Being the grassroots face of the Party, Uncle Gao offers fatherly guidance and protection—as a "Guardian God of the temple" to the peasant men. His revolution would liberate these men from the self-oriented strife for individual success and personal happiness as well as from the extortions of shamans and backward superstition. The peasants, just like his son, would be reborn—like the "newborn baby"—and become new working men through the cooperative movement. In a fatherly role that saves and educates, Uncle Gao promises a new life of prosperity to the rural men and women.

5. A Rural World without Landlords?

Political ideology supersedes literary creativity in Ouyang's first step to write in accordance with Mao's new literary direction. His experiences in the South District Cooperative helped him deliver *Uncle Gao* with plenty of Shaanbei dialect and everyday peasant language, a rather remarkable feat for a Cantonese speaker formerly known for his "European style of writing."[48] Some local cadres praised him for being able to converse with the villagers in local dialect and to seek feedback from them in the process of writing.[49] Nevertheless, the novel shows no real similar engagement with shamans. Compared to the lively character of Uncle Gao, who he modeled after Director Liu, all shaman characters appear to be abstract and formulaic enemies without distinct personalities. In this regard, literary critic C. T. Hsia is right to criticize the novel for rendering a kind of "fake realism" that fit people's language, feelings, and thoughts into a preconceived "formula."[50] Solely relying on articles in the *Liberation Daily*, Ouyang's portrayal of shamans served the ideological goal at the expense of literary originality and local flavor.

The novel's unsatisfactory representations of shamans were well noted by Communist writers and critics at the time. Zhao Shuli 趙樹理 (1906–1970), who by 1946 had been anointed by the Party as a "peasant writer" (*nongmin zuojia* 農民作家), was among the first to lavish praise on *Uncle Gao*. Zhao applauded the novel's poignant criticism of bureaucratism and empiricism that separated the Party and the masses in local society. Despite his deep

interest in writing about local religious culture, as we will see in the next chapter, Zhao oddly did not comment on *Uncle Gao*'s extensive treatment of shamans.[51] For Zhao, feudal superstitions in his native rural society were "problems," but not "enemies." Zhao's uncharacteristic silence suggests some disagreement with Ouyang's approach to rural superstition.

The criticisms from the late 1940s to 1960s also indicate that Yan'an's anti-shaman campaign was so local and so brief that it did not infiltrate the political sensibilities of CCP cultural workers outside the SGN Border Region. Most critics evaluated the novel based on the political environment after 1947, when the novel rolled off the press in an already changed world. Some criticized Ouyang for making the shamans such strong enemies of the cooperative movement, and for the length and, to their minds, triviality of the ghost haunting episode: "In places where the land reform has happened, weren't there more important matters than shamans?"[52] One critic recognized the news stories in the novel, and judged that the news stories were more educational in support of their attacks on superstition than their recycled versions in *Uncle Gao*.[53] In general, the critics complained that the novel neither presented a worthy enemy to the revolution nor provided enough anti-superstition education.

Ironically, Ouyang's commitment to Party ideology in the novel did not fully align with Yan'an's political realities either. His portrayal of shamans as "counterrevolutionaries" followed the Marxist-Leninist formulation of religion and superstition as the tools of class enemies, a theory that had been well integrated into CCP ideology in Yan'an, but Ouyang took this ideology more rigidly than the Party itself and so pushed the importance of the struggle against the shamans too far. As we have seen in previous chapters, the Party considered the Japanese invaders as the major enemy during this time and adopted a rather moderate policy toward "feudal superstition" in actual practice. The CCP was careful to distinguish between shamanic ritual healing and shamans themselves: the former was to be eradicated, and the latter rehabilitated. This explains why the CCP applauded Director Liu's collaboration with the *yinyang* master Dong and his innovative approach to "superstition shares" for the medical cooperative. Ouyang's harsh fictional treatment of shamans followed the Party's ideological hyperbole but failed to notice the Party's pragmatic measures on the ground. He was a zealous writer, not a shrewd politician.

Once Ouyang decided to take Mao's new literary path, the fate of *Uncle Gao* was bound to be out of his own control. By mid-1946, the CCP had turned

to radical land reform to win peasant support in the Civil War. The landlord class, not the shamans, became the archenemy of the revolution. As American writer William Hinton (1919–2004) witnessed in Long Bow Village, Shanxi Province, in 1948, the CCP mobilized the peasants to fight superstition as "a powerful weapon in the hands of the landlord class."[54] Shamans were only worth fighting if they were connected to the landlord class.

This new political situation rendered *Uncle Gao*'s anti-shaman theme somewhat out of date, for the rural world in which Uncle Gao lived was a world without landlords and without "classes." Ouyang calls Hao a "counter-revolutionary," but neither Hao nor the other shamans in the novel accumulate their wealth through landowning. Nor does Ouyang attribute the causes of rural poverty to class exploitation. In fact, he does not make any class distinctions among the cooperative members. This lack of class consciousness may have been the reason for the drag in the novel's publication and circulation: the CCP in the newly "liberated areas" of northern China once stopped the novel's release in 1947. It deemed the novel harmful to the land reform program because it described Uncle Gao and his son as sufficiently wealthy to hire laborers to farm for them and thus represented "the rich peasant line" (*funong luxian* 富農路線) that exploited the poor peasants.[55] Back to Yan'an in 1944–45, however, rich peasants who could afford to hire extra farmhands were labor heroes, such as the renowned Wu Manyou and the reformed shaman Guo Suiyun we met in Chapter 3. *Uncle Gao* simply missed the boat. By 1946, the revolution had already changed its enemy from shamans to landlords.

With too little attention on class struggle and too much on shamans, *Uncle Gao* never achieved the canonical status as those by some of his peers. The most notable comparisons are with *Hurricane* (*Baofeng zhouyu* 暴風驟雨, 1948) by Zhou Libo 周立波 (1908–1979), a former colleague of Ouyang's at the League of Left-Wing Writers in Shanghai, and *The Sun Shines Over the Sanggan River* (*Taiyang zhaozai Sanggan heshang* 太陽照在桑干河上, 1948) by Ding Ling, who was with Ouyang at the meeting with Mao in 1944. Like Ouyang, Zhou and Ding immersed themselves in village lives to write *for* the peasants. But unlike *Uncle Gao*, these two novels focused on class struggle, featuring heroes from *poor peasant* backgrounds who join the Party to overthrow the *landlords* in the land reform. In 1952, these two "land reform" novels jointly won the Stalin Prize in Moscow, the "equivalent of the Nobel Prize in the socialist world."[56] Taking an anti-Communist stand, C. T. Hsia dismisses all three works as "dull and mechanical."[57] Political bias

notwithstanding, Hsia's statement contains a grain of truth about the preset ideological goals of these works. What Hsia does not notice is that the CCP's own politics also separated *Uncle Gao* from the two other works in the course of Communist literary history.[58]

Some Communist cultural workers did celebrate *Uncle Gao*'s achievements in its first print run from 1948 to 1952. After all, Uncle Gao was the first peasant hero to appear in Communist fiction writing after *Mao's Talks*. Many concurred with Zhao Shuli on the novel's criticism of bureaucratism in local CCP government. They commended Ouyang's realistic portrayal of a peasant hero who grew out of his flaws to embrace Mao's ideal to "Serve the People." They also appreciated the novel's unusual angle in advocating Party economic policies that were often overlooked in other Communist fiction writings.[59] The novel was translated into multiple foreign languages in the 1950s to internationally promote China's agricultural cooperative movement.[60] It was reprinted in 1960 and 1962, likely after the failure of the Great Leap Forward forced Mao to relent to the economic recovery efforts of Liu Shaoqi 劉少奇 (1898–1969) and Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 (1904–1997). Another wave of reprints appeared in 1979, when the novel was upheld as historical proof that Deng's rural economic reform could be traced all the way back to the Yan'an period. Official interest always rested in the novel's propaganda value about the rural economy, rich peasants, and anti-bureaucratism. It was never about Ouyang's portrayal of shamans. Over time, Yan'an's anti-shaman campaign simply fell through the cracks in the PRC's political memory.

The common consensus among PRC literary critics is well summarized in an influential textbook on modern Chinese literature that was published by a joint team of scholars from nine leading Chinese universities in 1978:

> In its excessive descriptions of the anti-shaman struggle, the novel exaggerates the power of the shamans. This not only makes the structure of the novel uneven, to certain degrees it also diminishes the novel's ideological significance.[61]

Clearly, Uncle Gao fought an unappreciated battle against shamans in a bygone era. His fatherly heroism did not hold enough ideological weight for the Party-state to peddle it in the new world created after the Yan'an social reforms.

Figure 6.1 "The Leader of Shamans" (Wushen lingxiu 巫神領袖). *JFRB*, 4/1/1945.

To this day, *Uncle Gao* remains an obscure reference in modern Chinese literary history. The novel missed out on the fame and glory enjoyed by the land reform novels noted previously, and it never attained the kind of popularity achieved by a contemporary anti-superstition story by Zhao Shuli that we will discuss in the next chapter. While Zhao's story appeared in folk storytelling, local operas, and films, *Uncle Gao* was never adapted into any form of performance art, which means that the novel rarely reached the eyes and ears of the targeted "peasants, workers, and soldiers" in *Mao's Talks*.

The fate of *Uncle Gao* suggests the awkward place of shamans and feudal superstition in the Maoist revolution. The evils of the shamans needed to be eradicated, but were these evils evil enough? Mao's New Democracy, which culminated in the Yan'an's social reforms in 1944–45, was more of a case of wartime exigency. Despite Ouyang's enthusiastic endeavors, *Uncle Gao*'s

framework of rural struggle fell a step behind the revolution's changing priorities in the late 1940s.

Ouyang Shan was not alone in being caught in political limbo in 1945. At the time, Party propaganda shared his take on shamans, as seen in a woodblock cartoon published in the *Liberation Daily* on April 1, 1945, during the period in which Ouyang was writing *Uncle Gao*. The cartoon, entitled "The Leader of Shamans (wushen lingxiu 巫神領袖)," reenacts the scenario of Yang Hanzhu's ritual torture of Woman Bai, but written on the body of the battered woman is "the people behind enemy lines (houfang renmin 後方人民)," and the ferocious villain whipping the woman in a military uniform holds a banner inscribed with "Jiang [Jieshi]'s Style Democracy (Jiangshi minzhu 蔣氏民主)" (Figure 6.1). The cartoon plainly correlates the victimized woman to the Chinese people, and the shaman's ritual violence to the GMD state. This was perhaps a rare moment that shamans rose to be the enemy before they quickly fell back to the lesser noticed margins of the revolution.

7

A Different Place, a Different Direction

Reporting from northern China in 1947, American journalist Jack Belden (1910–1989) chanced upon a "shy" and "spectral-looking" man whom he found to be "possibly—outside of Mao Tze-tung [Mao Zedong] and Chu Teh [Zhu De 朱德] (1886–1976)—the most famous man in Communist areas."[1] This man was none other than Zhao Shuli, and what had made him famous was *The Marriage of Young Blacky* (Xiao Erhei jiehun 小二黑結婚), a short story that Zhao had published four years earlier in 1943. A native of southern Shanxi who never set foot in Yan'an, Zhao propagandized against superstition in the Communist-occupied Mount Taihang region (Map 0.2). Fighting with Japanese forces on the frontline, the Party and the army in this region retained a certain degree of autonomy from the central leadership in the far-flung Yan'an. Compared to their Yan'an peers, cultural workers here were less constrained by Party directives to develop literary devices and art forms suitable for battlefield exigencies.[2]

In this context, Zhao Shuli implemented Mao's proclamation that "art and literature should serve the people," but on his own terms. His works are known for being "problem-oriented" and "audience-oriented," often without a clear ideological concern. Zhao also insisted on writing little booklets that would sell cheaply on street markets and be recitable by the less educated.[3] *The Marriage of Young Blacky* exemplifies Zhao's literary approach. In a story of less than twenty pages, the male protagonist Young Blacky and his beautiful companion, Xiaoqin 小芹, pursue the free-choice marriage promoted by the CCP government. In addition to overcoming abuses of power by various village cadres, the couple challenges the parental authority of Young Blacky's father, Zhuge Two (Er Zhuge 二諸葛), and Xiaoqin's mother, Fairy Auntie Three (San xiangu 三仙姑). Zhao employs colloquial peasant language, traditional storytelling, and drama narratives to tell a popular story.[4] The story ushered Zhao Shuli into a celebrated career as a "peasant writer." It underwent many textual, theatrical, and cinematic adaptations and

influenced several generations among both rural and urban Chinese during and beyond the Maoist period.

Literary studies have explored how Zhao struck an uneasy balance between the Party's ideological agendas and the agency of peasants in the Communist revolution.[5] This chapter expands the scope of these studies by bringing into the conversation the Communist reconstruction of the "new woman" in relation to religion and superstition. In the May Fourth discourse, the new woman embodies a secular worldview. She defies the patriarchal system, rejects arranged marriage, and pursues true love and freedom of marriage.[6] Such an urban and modern image was set in stark contrast with the "traditional woman," who is rural, uneducated, and submits herself to the exploitation of both the patriarchal system and "feudal superstition." Moreover, May Fourth literature represents the "rural mother" as an accomplice of family patriarchy in imposing arranged marriages and other "feudal" vices on her daughters.[7] The Communists followed the May Fourth tropes, but they faced challenges in recasting the new woman for the rural-based revolution.

In order to change rural women's lives, the CCP had written freedom of marriage into its laws from the Jiangxi Soviet through all its base areas during the anti-Japanese War. Wartime exigencies, however, either compromised these laws for the benefit of male farmer-soldiers or compelled the government to make pragmatic adjustments.[8] Historian Xiaoping Cong well illustrates that, in response to local conditions, the SGN Border Region government changed the marriage laws from "freedom of marriage," which was often misinterpreted by local people as a father's free will over his daughter's marriage, to "self-determination," which advocated a rural woman's own autonomy in matters of marriage and divorce. Accordingly, cultural workers in Yan'an created new models for young rural women who rebelled against patriarchal authorities to pursue true love with hardworking young peasant men. In this revolutionary narrative, the cultural workers often invented a social mother—a female representative of the Party-state—to offer guidance to the "motherless" young heroines and thereby carved out "a feminine space in the masculine party-state."[9] The Party's social mother displaced the old rural mothers.

Zhao's writing belies both the urban orientation of the May Fourth new woman and the rebellious heroines in the Yan'an narratives. Long hailed as a "victory in the creative practice of Mao Zedong Thought on literature and art," Zhao's story was likely written *before* he had ever read *Mao's Talks*.[10] The

success of Zhao's work must therefore be viewed separately from the Party Central's dictate from Yan'an, and primarily in the context of religious and revolutionary culture in rural Shanxi. Zhao's attacks on arranged marriages take aim at "superstitious practices" that made the two parental figures obnoxious and comical, but not as domineering and repressive as the parental authorities in May Fourth and Yan'an literature. Zhao indeed contrasts a superstitious "rural mother" with a rebellious daughter, yet Young Blacky is the titular protagonist, and it is up to the male authority of the Party-state to deliver the happy outcome to the loving couple without the facilitation of a social mother. In other words, Zhao perceived superstition, not the patriarchal domination per se, as the major obstacle of CCP's marriage reform and women's emancipation.

In fighting against superstition, however, Zhao did not align himself with Yan'an's masculine vision of the Party-state. He did not seek to subdue male shamans with the power of medical science or the glory of labor. Like Ouyang Shan, who wrote two years after him, Zhao upheld anti-superstition education as a key component of the CCP's social reforms. But unlike Ouyang, Zhao attributed feudal superstition to the mother and father of his peasant hero and heroine rather than to "counterrevolutionaries." Nor did Zhao give up on the rural mothers in his home communities for the abstract social mother in the Yan'an narratives. He instead sought to reintegrate the old parental figures into the new family system.

This chapter discusses Zhao's story in three sections. Section 1 presents a brief history of the story. Section 2 examines Zhao's writing against the religious culture and wartime imperatives in southern Shanxi. Section 3 explores the contrast of literary representations between male and female practices of superstition as well as between the "old" and "new" woman. By speaking the language of the peasant for the peasant, Zhao opens up a new direction for the CCP's anti-superstition propaganda.

1. A Brief History of *The Marriage of Young Blacky*

The two parental characters in the story, Zhuge Two and Fairy Auntie Three, represent two different aspects of superstition. Zhao mocks Zhuge Two's divination arts by naming him after the legendary diviner and strategist in Chinese folklore, Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234). The old man opposes the marriage of Young Blacky and Xiaoqin because of a negative reading of their

horoscopes. He purchases a child bride for his son instead. Fairy Auntie is a common appellation for female spirit mediums who often bear the social stigma of sexual promiscuity. Xiaoqin's mother behaves accordingly in the novel: she has a long history of wantonly consorting with men in the name of her patron spirits. Because she herself is sexually interested in the handsome Young Blacky, she tries to get her daughter Xiaoqin to marry a much older wealthy man. Influenced by superstition in different ways, both Zhuge Two and Fairy Auntie Three seek to block the young couple's union.

As the young ones protest against the arranged marriages, they encounter a new threat from an abusive village cadre who makes sexual advances at Xiaoqin. When she rejects him, he has his men ambush the couple, accusing them of sexual misconduct, and sends them to be punished by the county chief. However, the chief takes the side of the young couple. He calls a mass meeting to denounce the cadre, and lectures Zhuge Two and Fairy Auntie Three about their actions. The father and mother subsequently give their consent to the marriage and change their misguided ways. Young Blacky and Xiaoqin are hence happily married and are praised by all as a model couple.

Zhao finished the story in May 1943, but the manuscript received tepid responses from the Communist literary circle in northern China. It was kept on the shelf until the official press published it in September, after having received this positive note from General Peng Dehuai 彭德懷 (1898–1974), who was then in charge of the Communist base areas in north China: "It is rare to see such an easy-to-understand story that comes from the masses."[11] Even then, many intellectuals ridiculed Zhao's work as a "low-class vulgar story."[12] A positive review of the story in a literary journal invoked harsh criticism from the authoritative *New China Daily* (*Xinhua ribao* 新華日報) in October 1943: "Our current task is to fight against the Japanese. What is the significance of writing about love and romance?" Subsequently, all papers and journals in the base areas remained silent on Zhao's work.[13]

In contrast to the negative response from the Party media, the story became an instant hit among the rural population in the Mount Taihang region. In just seven months, forty thousand copies were printed and reprinted. It was quickly adapted and made into local operas and plays that were performed throughout the Communist base area in Shanxi.[14] In 1946, the popularity of Zhao's work received recognition from Zhou Yang, the CCP propaganda leader in Yan'an, followed by established leftist writers such as Guo Morou 郭沫若 (1892–1978) in Shanghai and Mao Dun 茅盾 (1896–1981) in Hong Kong, where it was made into a film.[15] From 1946 to 1953, Zhao's many works

were held up as perfect combinations of political propaganda and popular entertainment. The CCP ordered them to be distributed as guidebooks for local cadres to learn how to work with the peasants. Communist writers and artists were called upon to march in the "Zhao Shuli direction."[16] Ahead of *Mao's Talks*, which likely did not reach the northern China base areas until October 1943, Zhao had paved his own literary path that really worked for the peasants, forcing the Party propaganda establishment to follow *him*.

Nearly a decade later, following up on the popular success and official recognition of the story, the students of the newly founded Central Academy of Drama in Beijing turned *The Marriage of Young Blacky* into a five-act "new opera" in 1953. The story and the songs from the opera became widespread even after the "Zhao Shuli direction" fell out of favor with the Party in the late 1950s. In 1964, the Beijing Film Studio made the story into a film.[17] By this time Zhao had already experienced several political ups and downs over successive campaigns. Most seriously, he was being criticized for writing "in-the-middle" peasant characters that defied "the most important and most central task of socialist literary creation—the task to create heroes."[18] In February 1965, Zhao was expelled from Beijing and sent back to Shanxi. Brutally persecuted and tortured, he died on September 23, 1970, at the age of sixty-four.[19]

Despite Zhao's tragic demise, *The Marriage of Young Blacky* remained one of the most popular propaganda stories. From its publication in 1943 to 1979, the story was reprinted twenty-six times by nineteen different presses, often in inexpensive illustrated editions aimed at rural readers. It also exists in many different local opera adaptations, performed by both well-known artists and amateur performers from all walks of life.[20] Zhao's "popular" reputation is hard to contest.

2. Zhao Shuli and the Religious Culture in Wartime Rural Shanxi

It is only recently that Zhao Shuli's works have been considered worthy of study in Western scholarship. C. T. Hsia finds it "impossible to discover any merit" in Zhao's early stories, and judges Zhao's "clumsy and clownish style [to be] utterly incompetent to serve the purposes of narration."[21] Hsia's comments resonate with the initial lukewarm responses of the Communist intellectuals mentioned previously, who valued Western techniques of fiction

writing that Zhao had shunned. Belden, who said that he had translated three of Zhao's works, apologized for his Western framework but also confessed that he was "disappointed" with Zhao's writings.[22]

Literary scholar Yi-tsi Mei Feuerwerker provides a more sympathetic view. She points out the predicament that Communist propaganda workers had to face: the literature "must be based on life and yet meet a priori ideological requirements," and hence Zhao had very little freedom to write outside of the Party line.[23] Literary scholars Hui Jiang and Xiaoping Wang both note Zhao's paradoxical commitment to the "new, modern" and the "old, peasant" literature but contend that Zhao managed to remain independent of the Party line. Jiang argues that Zhao rejected the tendency of May Fourth writers to look down on the peasant class and construct them as abstract symbols of something else, such as humanity or national characters. In Zhao's narrative, peasants "can think, understand, communicate, and make judgments about their own affairs, and they demonstrate thereby that they are the masters of their own worlds."[24] Wang follows a similar line of argument but points out that, by allowing peasants to speak for themselves, Zhao failed to awaken their class consciousness and mobilize them to "a higher ethical-moral, to participate in building a new society or constructing an 'alternative modernity.' "[25] In this regard, Zhao's works share common features with Ouyang's *Uncle Gao*: both opposed superstition, but both omitted class struggle from the rural life they described. How Zhao connected with the rural populace, however, sets *The Marriage of Young Blacky* apart from *Uncle Gao*.

Zhao's decision to present religion and rural women was profoundly shaped by the historical context particular to southern Shanxi, where "superstitions prevailed" and "sects and secret societies were as numerous as an ox's hairs."[26] Hailing from a declining gentry family, Zhao's father and grandfather were proficient in classical Chinese, and his father worked all year round on the sixteen *mu* of family-owned land.[27] The family had been followers of various sectarian religions, which had emerged in great profusion in late imperial times and were organized around apocalyptic eschatology, salvationist scriptures, healing services, and syncretic teachings from Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian traditions.[28] Zhao's grandparents and father followed the Three Sages Sect (*Sansheng jiaodao hui* 三聖教道會), and his mother and her well-to-do family belonged to a group called the Pure Tea Sect (*Qingcha jiao* 清茶教). Zhao began his childhood education not with the typical Confucian classics but with his father's rich collection of divination books, as well as the Three Sages Sect's scriptures, vegetarianism,

and rituals of incense offerings and prayers. He grew up a talented musician in the village opera band and maintained a lifelong passion for *Shangdang bangzi* 上黨梆子, the local opera that David Johnson calls the "ritual foundation of village life" in Zhao's home region.[29]

Zhao began to learn about the new literature at the age of nineteen, when he enrolled in the Provincial Normal School in Changzhi 長治, a mid-sized regional town in southern Shanxi. There he was drawn to the May Fourth ideals and devoured whatever literature he could get his hands on, from classical poetry to Ming-Qing vernacular fiction, from Lu Xun to Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906, Norwegian playwright) and Ivan Turgenev (1818–1883, Russian novelist). In the next few years Zhao wrote his own pieces of May Fourth–style "new fiction," but soon found that his village audience continued to be more interested in traditional stories. This discovery encouraged him to advocate social and political change with "old literary forms."

It was also during his school years at Changzhi that Zhao began to denounce the "superstitious" practices he had grown up with. At the age of twenty-one, under the influence of a radical classmate, Zhao broke the vegetarian vows of the Three Sages Sect for the first time in his life. It was possibly around this time that he became first exposed to Communist ideas.[30] He joined the CCP-led Sacrifice League in 1937 and became a Communist cultural worker in 1939. By then he had already begun to experiment with various "old forms" such as clapper ballads and local operas to produce Party propaganda. He was committed to changing the rural people's old ways of thinking with their familiar language and forms.

Opposing superstition was closely connected with the CCP's wartime survival in Shanxi. In 1941, a rebellion broke out in Licheng 黎城, a rural town in the Communist-controlled southern Shanxi. About four hundred to five hundred sect members of the Way of Li Trigram (*Liguadao* 離卦道) allegedly drank charm water in the hopes of becoming invisible "iron arhats" (*tieluohan* 鐵羅漢) and "iron woman soldiers" (*tienübing* 鐵女兵).[31] They attacked the CCP county government, which they called "demon headquarters." The rebellion was quickly put down. Although the Party's later investigation revealed that the rebellion was likely associated with widespread discontent with the CCP's tax policies and local cadres' abuses of power, the Party still publicly attributed responsibility to the Japanese and their collaborators, namely, the local sectarian organizations.[32]

The CCP investigation discovered that the Way of Li Trigram was one of the many sects active in an area where, as historian David Goodman notes, "everyone over thirty participated to some extent in one or another religious organization."[33] Some sect members were also members of the local CCP. The sect's pervasive presence thus posed serious challenges to the Party. First, it rivaled the CCP in its tight organizational structure. In 1941, the sect had a large following of more than three thousand people in over 120 villages in the Licheng area. It drew strength from a lineage-controlled hierarchical structure modeled after the GMD and CCP administrative systems. Second, the sect advocated self-cultivation, spiritual healing, and the unity of the Three Teachings. It preached the imminent descent of the "Heaven-Penetrating Perfected Master Gao of the Li Palace of the South" (Nanfang Ligong toutian zhenren Gao Laoye 南方離宮透天真人郜老爺). The sect's emphasis on apocalyptic sufferings was a direct criticism of the new order brought about by the CCP.[34] Third, the sect members were mostly young and well-to-do, and half of them were women. The CCP concluded that young women joined the sect for the promised opportunities to pursue free choice in marriage and to work outside of the home.[35]

Seeing these connections, the Party resolved immediately after the rebellion to oppose superstition and promote women's liberation. In January 1942, the CCP convened over four hundred cultural workers, gentry representatives, and army leaders in the Taihang region. Calling opposition to superstition "an urgent task on the cultural front line," the Party branded sectarian activities as superstition and explicitly linked them to Japanese enemies, spies, and collaborators. It required all cultural workers to attend to this "serious practical problem" down to village level and to work hard on providing guidance to "our compatriots in the sects."[36] Zhao rose to the occasion. He reiterated that "the dominant culture of the masses" was in popular stories, scriptures, and plays, which poisoned the minds of the people yet could be found in nearly every rural household.[37] Only through utilizing language and formats that were familiar to the peasants would the CCP be able to defeat the old culture. Shortly after the meeting, Zhao wrote two short fictional pieces for the purpose of educating sect members that would later provide some materials for *The Marriage of Young Blacky*.[38]

In connecting the fight against superstition with the issue of women's liberation, the CCP discredited the Li Trigram Sect's strict rules of sexual abstinence and moral cultivation. It accused sect leaders and members of sexual

impropriety, an official ploy against women's participation in popular religion and sectarian movements since late imperial times.[39] The Party also aimed to pull women out of the sect by promoting free-choice marriage and women's participation in politics. Coincidently, in July 1941 the Jin-Cha-Ji 晉察冀 (hereafter JCJ) Border Region government followed the 1939 example of the Yan'an headquarters and issued new Marriage Regulations. The regulations stipulated that "a marriage between man and woman has to be made by both partners freely, independently, and voluntarily." It abolished "coerced, arranged marriages and mercenary marriages [bride-buying and wife-selling]," and banned the practice of child brides, early-age marriages, and concubinage. In early 1943, a revised version of the Marriage Regulations was issued, followed by further regulations to enforce them, with a special focus on those who interfered with free-choice marriage either by coercion, involuntary arrangement, or monetary transaction.[40]

Zhao witnessed the effects of the new Marriage Regulations when the Party sent him to Liao County (Liaoxian 遼縣) in the spring of 1943.[41] There he learned about a lawsuit in which Yue Dongzhi 岳冬至, a nineteen-year-old militia man, was allegedly killed by several village cadres who were jealous of his romantic relationship with a beautiful girl named Zhi Yingxiang 智英祥 (known as Zhi Yingxian 智英賢 or Zhi Eryin 智二銀 in various sources). Having become a member of the Three Sages Sect, Zhi's mother had renounced conjugal life, forcing her disgruntled father to leave home for a vagrant life. When the mother decided to marry the daughter to a rich and much older man, Zhi refused to comply, because she had been courting several young men, including a village cadre. She then settled on the handsome Yue, even though Yue's family had already purchased a child bride for him. The county court found the cadre and three accomplices guilty of beating Yue to death. All four were thrown into prison and required to pay funeral expenses and financial compensation to Yue's family. Zhi was then married off, and the case was closed.[42]

Zhao was troubled by the case. Despite the new Marriage Regulations, the public was more critical than sympathetic toward Yue and Zhi's relationship. Villagers considered Yue's child bride legitimate, and hence Yue and Zhi's love affair without parental arrangement morally inappropriate.[43] Zhao sought to use the story of Yue and Zhi to explore what he saw as the feudal mentality that continued to obstruct the marriage reforms. With the Licheng rebellion as the backdrop, his story integrates both a concern for women's liberation and an opposition to superstition.

3. Gender, Sexuality, and the Contrast between the Old and New Rural Woman

In the story of the court case in Liao County, religion is a marginal issue—Zhi's mother happened to be a member of the Three Sages Sect. Zhao, however, makes the influence of superstition a central theme. He opens the story with two "superstitious" characters:

> The Liu Family Village has two oracles (*shenxian* 神仙): one is Zhuge Two from the front hamlet, and the other is Fairy Auntie Three from the rear hamlet. Zhuge Two was originally called Liu Xiude. He was once a smalltime merchant, and he never made a move without consulting the divination manuals. Fairy Auntie Three is the wife of Yu Fu from the rear hamlet. On every first and fifteenth of the month she would always wear a red cloth over her head and swayed and shimmied as if she was a spirit.[44]

With a diviner and a spirit medium as comical characters, Zhao turns the tragedy of Yue and Zhi into a comedy. He builds on both traditional and modern criticism to discredit the efficacy of their respective arts, each captured by a signature phrase. Zhuge Two once forbade his family to plant the spring crops because, according to the almanac, the time was "*not right for sowing*." When the "right day" finally arrived, it was already too late to plant anything. As for Fairy Auntie Three, she once set her mind on the stove while in a supposed trance during a healing ritual. She ignored the descending spirit to hiss at her daughter, "*The rice is overdone*!"[45] Zhao uses the two phrases to illustrate how superstition prevented men from planting crops on time and women from cooking properly—considered the very basics of a rural household's routine. The practices of fortune-telling and spirit mediumship are presented as comic shams.

In Zhao's telling, Zhuge Two and Fairy Auntie Three represent the vices of the traditional marriage system: the matching of horoscopes by divination and parental arrangements. Zhao, however, derides Fairy Auntie Three more relentlessly than Zhuge Two. Feuerwerker criticizes Zhao's more critical portrayal of Fairy Auntie Three as his bias against women and, by extension, the Communists' indifference to the "masculine hegemony in rural China."[46] This may indeed be the case to some extent, but we also need to place the issue of sexism in the context of southern Shanxi's village culture. In both the real-life story of Yue and Zhi, and Zhao's fictional account, rural mothers

do not appear simply as submissive followers of patriarchy. Zhi's mother forced her husband out of the house after taking the vows of the Three Sages Sect. She also arranged Zhi's marriage without the consent of Zhi's father and elder brothers.[47] In Zhao's story, Zhuge Two's wife is described as openly criticizing her husband's divination practices: "Get rid of your lousy Eight Trigrams! . . . All your life you've never even broken wind without first consulting them, what use have they ever had?"[48] Neither the husband nor the father-in-law can stop Fairy Auntie Three from taking up spirit mediumship, and she arranges Xiaoqin's marriage without consulting her husband.[49] None of these women bow down to their husbands. Thus, Zhao does not seem to deride Fairy Auntie Three either to defend or to decry patriarchy.

The story's gender bias might rather have been conditioned by Zhao's personal experiences. Zhuge Two's divination arts indeed place him closer to the male-dominated textual tradition than a spirit medium's trance. But the character also had a personal meaning for Zhao. By the time he wrote the story, Zhao had been away from home for six years. He drew the character based on loving memories of his father, who decided nothing without first consulting his divination manuals.[50] Like Zhao's father, Zhuge Two teaches Young Blacky to read when the boy is six years old and enjoys showing off his son's talent.[51] Moreover, Zhuge Two's preoccupation with matching horoscopes for his son and future daughter-in-law are common fatherly concerns in rural society. When the evil cadres frame Young Blacky and cart him off to the county court, his father worries through a sleepless night and before dawn rushes off to the county office to defend his son. Zhuge Two is foolish to believe in fortune-telling, but he is still a good father.

In contrast, the criticism of Fairy Auntie Three focuses on her body, age, uncontrolled sexuality, and failed motherhood. Modeling her character after a local female medium, Zhao describes Fairy Auntie as having been a medium for thirty years, since she was only fifteen years old. She had been the prettiest girl in the village but was forced, against her will, to marry an honest but slow-witted fellow who lived with his widowed father. Later, whenever she was alone at home, the young men of the village would visit her, and the house would be filled with laughter. Her father-in-law is furious when he finds out about this, but when he bars the men from visiting, the young woman becomes hysterical:

> She wept all day and the following night. In the morning she neither combed her hair nor washed her face. She wouldn't even eat. She just lay

> in bed and refused to get up. Father and son were helpless. An old woman neighbor invited a medium for them. The medium consulted the gods and said the bride has been possessed of a supernational being called Fairy Auntie Three. The girl herself moaned and muttered a lot of mystic nonsense. Thereafter, on the first and fifteenth of each month a divine spirit was said to enter her body. People burned incense before her and begged her for instructions on how to get rich or cure illnesses. That was when the incense table was first set up.[52] (Figure 7.1)

Here Zhao mentions only in passing the initiation ritual critical for a medium, which usually takes place in several steps. First, one becomes a medium not by personal choice but by the choice of a deity. Second, there is a long process of negotiation between the deity and the chosen one, who suffers from a painful illness and only recovers if she agrees to be the deity's medium. Third, an older medium may pass the deity on to someone new, or help initiate an apprentice. Fourth, a medium's service brings in income for the family, so despite possible social stigma, many families either turn a blind eye or willingly assist the medium. The income can also earn a female medium higher status in her family.[53] Zhao selects bits and pieces from these steps but presents the initiation as Fairy Auntie Three's *deliberate* choice to seek sexual opportunities out of wedlock.

Once she becomes Fairy Auntie Three, she gains the freedom to socialize with men, who flock to her beauty in the name of "consulting the spirit." Fairy Auntie Three always "dresses more attractively, combs her hair more smoothly, wears her jewelry more brightly, and applies facial powders more evenly. It isn't long before she has all the young men wrapped around her little finger."[54] Her sexual charm, however, declines as she grows older, and the young men who once came to visit her become husbands and fathers. Nevertheless, Fairy Auntie Three, at age forty-five, "continued to wear embroidered shoes and trousers with fancy cuffs. The front of her head was bald, but she covered this with a black kerchief. Unfortunately, powder couldn't smooth over her wrinkled face. It only made it like a frosted donkey turd."[55] She becomes a laughingstock among the village folk.

Neither defending nor decrying masculine hegemony over rural women in general, Zhao's representation of Fairy Auntie Three builds on traditional biases against the "three aunties and six grannies," who were accused of transgressing proper gender boundaries and sexual mores by offering healing, matchmaking, and other professional services to household

Figure 7.1 A leaf featuring Fairy Auntie Three at her incense altar, while the illustration of her angry father-in-law on the other side shows through the thin paper. Zhao Shuli, *Xiao Erhei jiehun* 小二黑結婚, Huabei: Xinhua shudian, 1944.

women.[56] Zhao's narrative of Fairy Auntie Three echoes many literati's anecdotes and folk stories in which young women, especially daughters-in-law, used the pretext of spirit possession to protest patriarchal authority and express their otherwise suppressed interests and desires.[57] For Zhao's rural audience, Fairy Auntie Three is a familiar trope.

Zhao deploys a secular point of view to reappropriate traditional biases against female mediums. In traditional sources, the link between spirit initiation and the protests of young women was usually hinted at rather than explicitly described, and female sexual debauchery was ascribed to the spirits rather than to a woman's voluntary behavior. Like his Yan'an peers, Zhao nullifies the mantic power of the spirits, but he does not present young women as silent victims. Instead, he exposes Fairy Auntie Three's initiation ritual as a screen for a daughter-in-law's active pursuit of sexual interests. Moreover, her wanton desires go beyond the cover of spirit mediumship when she sees her own daughter as a rival for male attention. She arranges her daughter's marriage not out of motherly duty but out of sexual jealousy. Unlike in the old system, where age usually granted mothers greater respect and authority, Fairy Auntie Three's uncontrolled sexuality under the pretense of spirit mediumship is portrayed like her clownish dresses and costumes: outdated, inappropriate, and ridiculous. While Zhuge Two appears fatherly, Fairy Auntie Three fails in both womanhood and motherhood.

Local opera culture informed Zhao's portrayal of Fairy Auntie Three. David Holm shows that the figure of the "old woman clown" (*chou poniang* 丑婆娘) was ubiquitous in folk performances throughout north China. Even in the new Communist *yangge* plays, it was still common to have a man dressed up as an old woman clown who either "wears great thick ancient-style clothing, brightly coloured makeup, and wears two large chili peppers from his ears," or "had his hair combed into an elaborate bun fully a foot long, at the very end of which he tucked in a red flower."[58] Holm also notes that in old plays lascivious behaviors were commonly enacted on stage by clown characters and men playing female roles. Communist propaganda held these behaviors as an improper way to resist "the lack of 'marital freedom' in traditional rural society."[59] The comical appearances of Fairy Auntie Three match up with the costumes, makeup, and representations of sexuality in folk performances. Pairing a cake-faced clownish mother with a superstitious yet devoted father, Zhao propagated free-choice marriage through the artistic tropes of traditional theater.

Zhao's personal experience offers another explanation for why he did not base the character of Fairy Auntie Three on Zhi's mother and the Three Sages Sect. As mentioned earlier, many of Zhao's own family were sect members, and Zhao had followed the sectarian teachings in his youth. By 1943, while seeing the sect as superstitious, he may nevertheless have acknowledged that

its emphasis on self-discipline and compassion was not completely contradictory to CCP doctrines. Nor were Zhi's mother's sectarian commitments to sexual abstinence common comical materials for the rural audience. The popular motif of a female medium's sexual debauchery would create a much bigger dramatic effect.

Political considerations may have also affected Zhao's representations of rural superstition. What Zhao recalled as the Three Sages Sect shared common features with many popular sects active in rural Shanxi at the time.[60] The emphasis on the unity of the Three Teachings and on the ritual arrangement of the Nine Mansions suggests some affiliation with the Way of Nine Mansions (*Jiugongdao* 九宮道) sect, whose network spread throughout Shanxi, Hebei 河北, Henan 河南, Shandong 山東, and beyond.[61] As noted above, the CCP considered various sectarian groups in Shanxi to be Japanese collaborators. In contrast, diviners and spirit mediums without organizational structures were commonplace in everyday rural life and hence posed less of a threat. By associating Zhuge Two and Fairy Auntie Three with individual practices rather than sectarian religion, Zhao expressed his own views of feudal superstition: he supported Communist social reforms that aimed to educate, rather than eliminate, the fathers and mothers of people like Zhao himself.

In stark contrast to the clownish Fairy Auntie Three, Xiaoqin represents a new woman who pursues love and marriage very differently. Like her mother when she was young, Xiaoqin is a pretty girl who attracts the attention of the village young men. But, unlike her mother, she is loyal to her lover once she has committed herself to him, hence she rejects the sexual advances of the married village cadre. The most important difference between Xiaoqin and her mother is that Xiaoqin chooses the best possible match for herself: Young Blacky is so handsome that everywhere he goes, "women [can] not take their eyes off him."[62] A hero from the village militia, he had received a "sharpshooter" medal for having killed two enemies in battle. Young Blacky's heroic masculinity and Xiaoqin's feminine beauty make them a perfect union of "talent and beauty" (*caizi jiaren* 才子佳人), a popular motif in traditional entertainment culture.[63]

"Talent and beauty" can only unite, however, if they break free from superstition. Both Xiaoqin and Young Blacky are described as having been favorably predisposed to their parents' superstitious practices when they were young: the nine-year-old Xiaoqin is so entranced by her mother's chanting that she forgets to tend the rice on the stove. Young Blacky begins at age six

to learn about the Five Phases, the Eight Trigrams, the almanacs, and the divination manuals.[64] As they grow older, however, they reject their parents' practices. They also contest the village cadre's accusation of their love affair as "sexual corruption," a view shared by many of the "feudal-minded" peasants in the legal case involving Yue and Zhi. Xiaoqin and Young Blacky's union, secured by the final approval of the county chief, results in a new morality of romance and marriage. Women no longer need to resort to illicit sex through spirit mediumship to escape arranged marriages. The Communist government, rather than predestined fate, ensures a happy outcome for the young people by protecting free choice in marriage.

The educational effect of *The Marriage of Young Blacky* cannot be overestimated. The story's rapid adaptation into local operas ensured that it reached thousands of ordinary peasants, many of whom watched the performance time and time again. The story had a particular appeal to women: "Even old women, young girls, and wives holding babies who lived ten and twenty *li* away would light torches and travel over mountains and valleys in order to catch a glimpse of the great performance."[65] After reading, listening to, or watching *The Marriage of Young Blacky*, some village mediums and fortune-tellers were reportedly filled with remorse and sought to "rectify" their behavior. Parents stopped forcing marriage upon their grown-up children. And young secret lovers felt emboldened to marry without seeking parental permission.[66]

Although Young Blacky and Xiaoqin are the story's protagonists, it was largely the comical characters of Zhuge Two and Fairy Auntie Three who made the story a popular choice for local opera adaptations. The two characters gained the bulk of attention in CCP media coverage. Some newspapers even reported both the A and B cast of Fairy Auntie Three and Zhuge Two without even mentioning the performer who played Young Blacky, or only listing him after the other three characters.[67] Official forum discussions also focused mostly on the two clownish parental characters.[68] Professional performers of folk troupes found it comfortable portraying Zhuge Two, because the "superstitious," "foolish," and "stubborn" fortune-teller fit the character archetype in traditional operas of the male clown.

Playwrights, commentators, and performers expressed more anxiety over how to portray Fairy Auntie Three. They generally agreed that she should be played "coquettish" and "shrewd," but that she should not let her coquetry sink to the kind of lewd obscenity expected of female clowns in traditional opera performances.[69] This was not an easy task since professional

performers had been trained to perform the female clown as simultaneously comic and erotic. While some succeeded in walking this fine line, others were reported to have "carried it too far" or acted "with too much exaggeration" in order to "please the audience."[70] Some commentators wanted more than her coquetry on stage. They suggested that, in order to highlight the educational effect, the production should first put on a "show and tell" in front of the county chief, calling on Fairy Auntie Three to invoke her spirit in séance, having the village head ask for a cure and then forcing Fairy Auntie to make a confession and repent after the spirit fails to descend into her—a familiar scenario that we saw in the crackdown on shamans by local officials in the Party news stories and in the performance of the *Red-Shoed Demoness*.[71] When it came to stage performances, propaganda workers still struggled to contend with what they saw as the same "vulgar, lewd, and superstitious" appeal of traditional operas.

Zhao's origins in rural southern Shanxi provided him with a considerable advantage over Yan'an's mostly urban, Western-trained cultural workers in winning over rural audiences. In this regard, he was more like an educated version of the bard Han Qixiang. In Yan'an, neither Chen Ming nor Ouyang Shan could demonstrate a cultural insider's familiarities with the local language, narrative style, and "superstitious" mentalities that Zhao had mastered in his story. The more intense environment of ideological remolding in Yan'an also made it harder for writers to deviate from the Party's predetermined ideological framework. It is ironic yet unsurprising that, despite Mao's exhortations, the CCP's most successful anti-superstition outreach to the rural masses came from the Taihang region, not from Yan'an.

Besides an individual author's local background and literary approach, political factors set the Yan'an creative works apart from Zhao's story. Opposing superstition and liberating women, particularly through marriage reform, had been crucial items on the agendas of both the GMD and CCP governments. In Yan'an, however, the two issues remained largely disconnected. The concerns for economic, military, and political survival, rather than the transformation of "superstitious" peasant mentality per se, resulted in the CCP's handling of each issue separately. In the historical context of 1944–45, the anti-shaman campaign aimed to transform male shamans into productive workers and save women's reproductive bodies for population

growth in the SGN Border Region. Male productivity and female fertility converged in the Party's vision of rural prosperity in a New Democratic Society.

The CCP did call for women's liberation in the Border Region, particularly for women's participation in economic production, but no connection was established between this concern and the anti-shaman campaign.[72] The extreme shortage of women in the Border Region created different social issues for local women and for the more educated female population who came to Yan'an to join the revolution.[73] The Party allocated young educated women as wives for high-ranking Party leaders and cadres, often without taking these women's personal desires into consideration. In the meantime, it promoted the ideal of "wise mothers and good wives" among the peasants. Traditional marriage practices persisted at the village level, even among grassroots cadres.[74] While the new marriage laws encouraged young rural women to exercise "self-determination" in the matters of marriage and divorce, the CCP propaganda about the marriage reform bore no impact on the anti-shaman campaign.[75]

As we will see in the next chapter, cultural workers in Yan'an *did* have the opportunity to connect anti-superstition propaganda with women's liberation, but they chose to break away from these themes to pursue higher goals. While works such as *The Marriage of Young Blacky* continued to serve CCP's social reform program, a new kind of revolutionary arts and literature was on the rise in Yan'an.

PART III
THE MAGNUM OPUS

8

Saving the Ghosts, Saving the People

In May 1944, at the height of the anti-shaman campaign, the CCP-led Northwest Battleground Service Corps (Xibei zhandi fuwutuan 西北戰地服務團, hereafter NBSC) returned to Yan'an after five years of propaganda service on the northern China front lines.[1] The troupe brought back with them a folk story about a "White-Haired Fairy Maiden" (*Baimao xiangu* 白毛仙姑).[2] The story quickly captivated the cultural workers at Yan'an, and many wanted to pair it with the *Red-Shoed Demoness* as "the Red and the White" (*yihong yibai* 一紅一白) to fight superstition.[3] Yet the literary recreation about the White-Haired Fairy Maiden, under the new title of *The White-Haired Girl*, took a different path from that of the *Red-Shoed Demoness*. By the early 1950s, the *Red-Shoed Demoness* had faded into obscurity while *The White-Haired Girl* became an exemplary model of *Mao's Talks* and an all-time revolutionary classic. As many scholars have pointed out, the opera's highly symbolic narrative suppresses sexual conflicts within a new ideological discourse of class struggle. It represents CCP propaganda's use of gender imagery to create a new national myth, and it has succeeded because it efficiently incorporates political messages into traditional themes of romance, revenge, and justice that cater to both peasant entertainment and urban culture consumption.[4]

This chapter brings new insights to existing scholarship by engaging the opera's gender politics in relation to Yan'an's anti-superstition polemics in particular and the CCP discourses of religion and revolution in general. The political significance of *The White-Haired Girl* went above and beyond all the other literary works discussed in this book, because the opera marked the Party's critical transition from moderate social reforms in the base areas to all-out war and revolution on a national scale. The different ways in which age, sexuality, and the female body are depicted in the opera epitomize the intentional efforts of propaganda workers to remove traditional religion and morality from peasant life. The success of the opera, however,

was not built on the Party's ongoing campaign against superstition. Nor did the opera promote gender equality. Using gendered language, imagery, and salvific narratives so prominent in traditional religion, it bypassed both anti-superstition and women's liberation to construct a new faith in Mao, in the Party, and in the New China.

The chapter begins with an introduction to the history of the story and the opera (Section 1). The next three sections (Sections 2 through 4) examine the production of the opera from 1945 to 1953, when propaganda workers drew on the trope of female ghosts and other popular religious lore to craft a narrative of class oppression and liberation. Section 5 explores the inadvertent parallels between the opera and a nineteenth-century popular religious text on female cultivation and salvation. Section 6 analyzes how the opera's theme of salvation generated heightened emotions to garner widespread support for the revolution. The highly gendered symbolism drawn from traditional religion helped establish the CCP as the new embodiment of heavenly order and justice.

1. A Brief History of *The White-Haired Girl*

The story of *The White-Haired Fairy Maiden* is believed to have been widely circulated in the Communist-occupied areas of western Hebei (in the JCJ Border Region) since the early 1940s.[5] Later reconstructions of the story mention three possible origins of the story or a mix of the three. The first two begin similarly: in the first, a young village woman is forced to become a concubine of a landlord, and in the second, a young village woman is raped by a landlord. In both versions, the landlord expects a son from the woman. After she gives birth to a baby girl, mother and daughter are driven out of the house. They live in the wilderness and survive on temple offerings that people make to the mother as the "White-Haired Fairy Maiden." Mother and daughter are later saved by the Communist army, and the mother subsequently joins the Communist forces. In the third version, a landlord father and son are both infatuated with a young woman. In an argument over her, the son accidently kills the father. He and his mother frame the woman as the murderer, and this leads to a similar story of exile. All three versions of the story center on a young peasant woman suffering from the abusive power of village landlords, as well as the traditional bias that favors boys over girls.[6] The story, in each case, is

ultimately about how the CCP dispels superstition and ends the suffering of rural women.

At Yan'an, the Luyi artists turned the story into an opera titled *The White-Haired Girl*.[7] They set the narrative in 1935, two years before the outbreak of the resistance war against Japan. The landlord, Huang Shiren 黃世仁, covets the beautiful Xi'er 喜兒, a seventeen-year-old peasant girl, and forces Xi'er's father, Yang Bailao 楊白勞, to pay off his debt by selling Xi'er to him. Overwhelmed by guilt, Yang commits suicide on the eve of the New Year. Over her father's dead body Xi'er is forced to part with Dachun 大春, her fiancé from a peasant family next door, and is taken to the Huang house. There she suffers daily abuse from the landlord's Buddhist mother and is eventually raped by Huang, causing her to become pregnant. When Huang and his mother plan to sell the pregnant Xi'er, she flees to the mountains and gives birth to a baby. Living in the wilderness for three years, her clothing turns ragged, her hair and body turn white, and she becomes a living ghost. When she steals food offerings from a temple altar, villagers take her as a "White-Haired Fairy Maiden." She is later rescued by Dachun, who had fled the village to join the Communist army and now returns to lead the new government. Huang is subjected to mass struggle sessions, and his land and properties are redistributed among the poor. Xi'er, Dachun, and the villagers live a happy farming life thereafter.[8]

The White-Haired Girl debuted in Yan'an in April 1945 as a tribute to the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party. It turned out to be an instant and enduring success.[9] The opera was highly praised by top-level CCP leaders and soon became a "must-show" by almost every propaganda troupe in all Communist "liberated areas." The Luyi artists continued to revise the opera to the new demands of land reform and "national liberation." It was made into a film in 1950, and won an international film award in what was then Czechoslovakia.[10] Based on the film, Japan's Matsuyama Ballet company performed the opera in Tokyo in 1955 and brought the performance to Beijing in 1958.[11] In 1964, the Shanghai Ballet Academy transformed the story into a ballet-opera. As one of the eight model operas during the Cultural Revolution, the ballet-opera was revised into a color film in 1972.[12] Many of its episodes were emulated in mass performances, and almost everyone, young and old, could sing at least one or two songs from the film. For most who have lived through Maoist times, the White-Haired Girl remains a cultural icon of the oppressed in the old society, and Huang Shiren a synonym for the condemned landlord class.

2. From Anti-superstition Struggle to National Myth

To date, no studies on *The White-Haired Girl* have noted the significance that the story arrived in Yan'an during the campaign against superstition. That context was not just background noise. It prompts us to ask why the propaganda workers did not follow the original story line to continue the fight against superstition. He Jingzhi, the chief playwright of the opera, recollected in 1946 that the original story was, in fact, an anti-superstition story focusing on the "White-Haired Fairy Maiden":

> In a village by the mountain, the Eighth Route Army found it difficult to initiate any activities there after it was liberated, because the villagers and the village cadres were all deeply superstitious. They said that the village had a "White-Haired Fairy Maiden," whose whole body was white. She often appeared at night, and she resided in the Nainai temple (Nainaimiao 奶奶廟) at the village entrance. She once ordered the villagers to make offerings to her on the first and fifteenth of each month. The villagers had obeyed her orders for a long time, and they indeed saw that the offerings they made the previous night would disappear the next morning. When the villagers neglected her and failed to make offerings, they would hear a strange shrieking voice coming from behind the dark altar: "You . . . do not worship the Fairy Maiden. Be warned of [upcoming] disasters and catastrophes."[13]

The next part of the story delivers a clear anti-superstition message. Nobody came when Communist cadres called for a mass mobilization meeting because the villagers had all gone to worship the White-Haired Fairy Maiden. In a midnight ambush, the cadres chased a "white thing" out of the temple and all the way into a dark cave in the mountain. There they found that the deity was in fact a young woman: after living in the cave for years, she "saw no sunlight and ate [food] without salt, so [that] her whole body [had] turned white."[14] By revealing her true identity, the cadres saved the woman and liberated the village from superstition.

This earlier version of the story incorporates many elements of popular religion. Disembodied spirits, nighttime ghosts, and the worship of female deities had long been favorite topics in Chinese storytelling, opera performance, and literati anecdotal writing. For most Chinese, white is the color of the *yin* force, routinely associated with ghosts and ghostly appearances. Death rituals are called "white affairs" (*baishi* 白事). The setting of the story,

the Nainai temple, was widespread in northern China. People addressed a goddess interchangeably as Nainai, Niangniang, or Xiangu. Oftentimes under the name of one goddess a temple housed a cluster of nine female deities together (as we saw in the case of the Holy Mothers in Chapter 4). It was also common for such a temple to include side shrines for lesser and demonic spirits, or for female deities originating from the vengeful ghosts of women who had died young or unjustly.[15] The notion that a white and nocturnal female creature had colonized the Nainai temple brought into play popular folklore about female deities and ghosts in northern China.

Mountain caves have also captured the Chinese imagination since ancient times. Caves are much like graves, and their dark spaces make natural dens for demons, goblins, and other deadly *yin* forces.[16] In the Daoist tradition since the fourth century, however, caves have also been construed as earthly heavens inhibited by the "transcendent" (*xian* 仙).[17] Specifically, the Chinese literati recorded a legend of a "Hairy Maiden" (*maonü* 毛女) as early as the first century BCE. She was believed to be a palace maiden of the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE) and had fled to Mount Hua in southeastern Shaanxi at the fall of the dynasty. After consuming pine resin at the instruction of a Daoist mystic, she "had hair grown all over her body."[18] Her overgrown hair indicated a critical transformation: she was now invulnerable to hunger and cold, her body became so light that she could fly, and she lived on Mount Hua for over 170 years.[19] The story later evolved into many different versions locating her to different mountains; all centered on her transcendental features enabled by the extraordinary hair, sometimes colored black or green.[20] She became a literary trope promoting Daoist transcendence.

The Hairy Maiden stories might have shaped propaganda workers' early fancies with *The White-Haired Girl*. Chinese scholar Li Jianguo finds that, despite the variations, the main theme of the Hairy Maiden stories remained the same: the heroine escapes into the mountain from tyrannical persecution, and there she attains transcendence by the guidance of a Daoist mystic.[21] Leftist writers in the 1930s and 1940s dispensed with the Daoist elements but, as literary scholar Max Bohnenkamp shows, they kept the trope of the Hairy Maiden to convey a modern woman's fight for independence or the nation's struggle for salvation. One such writer, Shao Zinan 邵子南 (1916–1955), had already used the "hairy" motif to represent the sufferings of the laboring class in his fiction writings. After joining the CCP propaganda force in the JCJ base area, Shao collected the orally circulated lore about the White-Haired Fairy Maiden. He was among the first to bring the story to Yan'an and

oversaw the story's initial adaptation for the opera.[22] Folklore, popular religion, literary tradition, and the new awareness of class oppression converged at the birth of *The White-Haired Girl* in Yan'an.

The mixed elements met mixed reactions in Yan'an. In the context of the anti-shaman campaign, the imagery of a young woman in white traversing between a temple and a cave reminded people of the equally mysterious Red-Shoed Demoness. Some cultural workers wanted to follow the story's original themes of anti-superstition and women's liberation, while others dismissed it as a "meaningless story of spirits and the strange."[23] Either way, the presumed focus was on the possibilities of staging female ghosts, deities, and other "superstitious" scenes built on a village sex affair that went awry. We have already seen how some of these themes were played out in the various versions of the *Red-Shoed Demoness*.

The expected path of recreation, however, was vetoed by the Party's chief propaganda architect, Zhou Yang. Designating the opera as a tribute to the Party's Seventh Congress, Zhou believed that Luyi should go beyond Yan'an's existing *yangge* experiments to create a new form of "national opera." He further instructed that this new national form should serve greater political goals: instead of attacking superstition, it should first and foremost illustrate "the contrast between the old and the new society, and the liberation of the people."[24] By the winter of 1945, several months after the opera's debut, this theme was consolidated into a signature phrase that defined it in the history of CCP propaganda: "The Old Society turns people into ghosts, and the New Society turns ghosts back into people."[25] On the verge of the Civil War, the Party needed to stand above and beyond Yan'an's social reforms in order to claim a historic mandate against its political rivals.

To express peasant liberation, Xi'er's discolored whiteness was identified with the oppressed peasant class and the Chinese nation. Xi'er's salvation would be the Chinese nation's salvation. In this mythmaking endeavor, the complexity of conflicts and problems in Chinese peasant life were simplified into clear-cut antagonisms between opposing forces: principally, the old social order versus the new social order, and the peasant class versus the landlord class.[26] Specific issues of opposition to superstition, public health, marriage reform, gender equality, and other social programs that would have greater impact on peasants' real-life situations were now subsumed into the larger framework of class struggle against the landlord class and the GMD state.

3. From a Deity to a Ghost

Zhou Yang's instruction to establish a new theme for the story resulted in the elimination of popular religious elements from the opera and the transformation of the young woman from a supposed deity into a vengeful ghost. First, the title changed. As we have seen in previous chapters, the image of an innocent and victimized rural young woman justified the Party's cause. The changes to the story's title testify to the making of Xi'er into such an image. The earlier titles of "White-Haired Fairy Maiden" or "White-Haired Woman" focus on either the mysterious white body on the temple altar or the survival of a mother and her baby. The new title of "The White-Haired Girl" moved the focus to a young woman who has suffered injustice and harbors revolutionary potential. She needs to be saved.

Next, the order of narration changed. The original story builds up suspense over the mysterious "White-Haired Fairy Maiden" from the beginning. The opera's opening scenes, in contrast, highlight the tension between the landlord and the poor tenants, represented by Xi'er's father, as well as the conflict between Huang's sexual interest in Xi'er, and Xi'er's romantic commitment to Dachun. When Xi'er grabs food from the temple altar, the audience would be fully aware of the fake identity of the "White-Haired Fairy Maiden." Their attention is directed to Xi'er's misery rather than to the mysterious female deity. Xi'er's "whiteness" becomes a matter-of-fact result of her victimization by the evil landlord and hence the old social system.

With the mysterious goddess gone, the meaning of the cave changes, too. Earlier versions of the story exploit the popular fascination with the White-Haired Fairy Maiden in relation to caves and immortal maidens. In the opera, the cave symbolizes the old social order:

> You want me to die and I won't die,
> I take shelter in the cave.
> For every day I have endured I mark a line on the cave's rock,
> But I cannot carve up my thousand layers of grievances and ten thousand layers of hatred.
> [. . .]
> The thousand layers of grievances and ten thousand layers of hatred,
> They are carved into my bones and they are inscribed in my heart!
>
> 要害我死我偏不死,

來到這山洞安下身.
熬過了一天我石頭上面劃一道—
劃不盡我的千重冤, 萬重恨.
[. . .]
萬恨千仇,千仇萬恨,
劃到我的骨頭——記在我的心![27]

Here, the cave is both the cause of and witness to Xi'er's tattered body and ghostly life. It harbors Xi'er's grievances and hatred, which are also the peasant class's grievances and hatred (Figure 8.1).

A fourth change affects the relation of the White-Haired Girl to the locals. He Jingzhi's original story features Xi'er's disembodied and shrieking voice, a common scene in popular stories. Female deities spoke, often through mediums, to demand offerings and to threaten disasters if their requests failed to be answered. In the opera and in the 1950 film, Xi'er never directly speaks out to the villagers. She appears in a folk storytelling scene, in which a group of villagers sit around an old man, who recounts how he came to the temple in a rainy night and was scared at the billowing curtain behind the altar:

> I knelt right down and kowtowed and prayed, kowtowed and prayed. I said, "White-haired Goddess, White-haired Goddess, please don't take offense, I [have] to come in here to get out of the rain. . . ." Nothing happened. So I relaxed and caught my breath. I slowly raised my head and, oh my, the White-haired Goddess was standing right above me. She was white all over. I felt a cold shiver run through me. I snuck a look, saw a flash of white, and then there was nothing.[28]

Because the audience already knows the true identity of the Fairy Maiden, the old man's narrative would not create any sense of curiosity; rather, it makes him look self-evidently superstitious. In this presentation, Xi'er never actively assumes the identity of the White-Haired Fairy Maiden with the villagers. The audience no longer hears her shrieking threats, which would intensify their feelings of fear, awe, or curiosity. By silencing the female deity, the opera deprives Xi'er of her potential agency to seek revenge.

Having removed popular religious elements from the original story recollected by He Jingzhi, both the opera and the film add new scenes. In these revised versions, landlord Huang and his underling Mu Renzhi 穆仁

Figure 8.1 A performance of *The White-Haired Girl* in the city of Zhangjiakou 張家口, April 1946. Photo by George Lacks (1910–1960). The LIFE Picture Collection.

智 take shelter in the same temple on a rainy night. Xi'er quickly recognizes them and hurls objects at them. Terrified by Xi'er's appearance, Huang and Mu run away screaming, "It is a ghost! It is a ghost!" It is from Huang's and Mu's screams that Xi'er realizes that she has become a ghost. She first protests: "I am the Xi'er that you had abused! I am a human!" But she soon admits that she is a vengeful ghost: "You say I'm a ghost. Well then, I am a ghost! I am the ghost of someone who was persecuted to death. I want to tear

your flesh and bite you!"[29] As she cries out, "I am a ghost," she acknowledges herself as a victim of the two villains and launches a direct accusation against Huang and the old society he represents.

Why did the propaganda workers deliberately make Xi'er a vengeful ghost but not a fairy maiden? In Chinese folk religion, female deities and ghosts are closely connected, often alter egos. The deities can embody both the danger of female sexuality and compassionate motherhood.[30] It is common for people to worship a ghostly figure and accord her the status of a deity so that the menacing potential of a female ghost would be transformed into a benevolent power. By this rationale, Xi'er as a fairy maiden can save herself and others.

The Yan'an artists, however, played on the ambiguity of folk beliefs in female deities, rejecting the deities' protective power and emphasizing their ghostly features. In muting her at the altar, the opera denies Xi'er's agency to transform herself from a vengeful ghost to a deity. When the White-Haired Fairy Maiden does speak out in the opera, she is projected as the mouthpiece of Huang instead. Huang's underling Mu uses the name of the White-Haired Fairy Maiden to threaten the villagers who had joined CCP's mobilization work: "The White-Haired Fairy Maiden has efficacious power. People of all four directions should not make blunders."[31] In the film, Huang orders Mu to burn down the house of a village activist and post a demon-exorcising charm that warns: "The manifest White-haired Goddess is powerful. If the people behave correctly and keep to their proper places, she will protect them. If they perpetrate outrages, then Heaven will show no mercy."[32] The Fairy Maiden's divine power is presented here to defend the landlord and guard the old social order. Only by taking away the power of the gods and goddess could the opera establish a new belief in the CCP among the suffering peasants.

4. Gender and Religion in Xi'er's Salvation

The Yan'an artists did not completely leave aside the anti-superstition theme—they simply revamped traditional religion to build a new faith. During the Yan'an period and thereafter, the propaganda consistently presented class enemies as a mostly masculine force of demons and monsters, be it the Japanese invaders, the American imperialists, the GMD leader Jiang Jieshi, or characters like the landlord Huang.[33] Xi'er's ghostly features,

however, evoke the female ghost as a distinct category in this otherwise male cast of traditional demonology. The Chinese believe that young women who have suffered and died often come back to their persecutors in the form of vengeful ghosts. Like all demonic forces, female ghosts need to be exorcised by ritual specialists. Yet the very injustice that has been inflicted upon the women could "move heaven and shake earth," so much so that female ghosts would take revenge on their persecutors by the power of heavenly justice.[34] Popular stories about female vengeful ghosts helped perpetuate a common belief in heaven (*tian* 天) as the ultimate source of moral and cosmological power that would embolden the weak, right the wrongs, and deliver justice.

The cultural workers conjured up Xi'er from the traditional lore of female ghosts, but with new twists. In popular belief, the resurrection of female ghosts relied on the power from the *yang* world—most notably the power of male sexuality. Female ghosts usually attempt to regain life through either possessing the body of the living or having sex with young men, and the stories featuring these female ghosts would lead to either the demise of the living or the exorcistic victory of ritual specialists (see also Chapter 5). In *The White-Haired Girl*, the traditional motif of male sexuality finds a new expression through Xi'er and Dachun's true love. Deprived of her own vengeful power, Xi'er's resurrection and retribution count on the return of Dachun, or, in the name's literary sense, the Great Spring, the *yang* regenerative source of life.

Dachun does not exist in the oral versions of the story. His introduction is significant. In the 1945 text, Dachun is a young peasant and becomes a CCP activist after the Communist army arrives. In the revisions after 1946, he appears to have fled to join the Red Army after Xi'er's captivity and later returns as a CCP soldier. The character adds a romantic touch with "all's well that ends well for the two people in love" (*youqingren zhongcheng juanshu* 有情人終成眷屬), a traditional ideal that suits popular entertainment tastes.[35] Moreover, Dachun personifies the peasant class's self-identification with the Communist cause. In contrast to the Communist cadre descending on the village in the original story, Dachun is an insider, sharing the same grievances and hatred with Xi'er and other villagers against Huang. Unlike the old man who kowtows to the Fairy Maiden, Dachun leads the masses to remove the obstacle of goddess worship from the Communist mobilization work. The character dissolves the barriers between the enlightened cadres and the superstitious masses. As Daochun takes Xi'er out of the dark cave and into the bright daylight, the stage lights up, accompanied by the chorus:

The sun has risen! The sun has risen!
The sun—it shines ten thousand miles, ten thousand miles!
For thousands of years in the past,
We have been suffering all the hardships.
Today we watch the sun rise,
It expels ten thousand layers of darkness!

太陽出來了, 太陽出來了!
太陽–光芒萬丈,光芒萬丈!
上下幾千年,
受苦又受難.
今天看見出了太陽,
趕走了萬重黑暗![36]

Living in the historical darkness, Xi'er and the peasant class are now resurrected though the life-regenerating spring and the sun—the cosmic *yang* force. Attempting to go beyond the anti-superstition theme, the Yan'an artists realized Xi'er's salvation through traditional cosmology and ritual exorcism.

The opera's utilization of religious motifs goes hand in hand with its criticisms of popular religion and traditional moral values. It is of deliberate design that the villain's name is Shiren, meaning "benevolence of a lifetime," or "benevolence from generation to generation." His underling bears the name of Renzhi, meaning benevolence and wisdom, two of the five Confucian constants.[37] In the film, the plaque hanging above the entrance of Huang's house reads: "House of Accumulating Goodness" (*Jishan tang* 積善堂). These symbolic terms stand in contrast with the opera's representation of the "reality": under the plaque, Huang's appetite for collecting debts is insatiable, forcing poor tenants into exile and suicide. Xi'er is raped in Huang's study, where traditional moral principles are supposed to be cultivated. In the film, the rape scene happens in the Huang family's Buddhist Hall. In either case, Huang's wanton use of his power proves the uselessness of Buddhist gods and traditional morality in saving Xi'er and the peasant class from the landlord predators.

Harsh criticism of traditional religion can also be found in the portrayal of another major female character, Huang's mother.[38] The old woman acts as a compassionate matriarch of a blessed family. She appears for the first

time in the family's Buddhist Hall, making incense offerings and chanting, "Do as much goodness as possible in one's lifetime. Amitabha Buddha will send one to the Western Paradise." She declares that the family's prosperity has been brought about entirely by "the family's ancestral merits and the protection of Buddha."[39] Under the guise of a devout Buddhist, however, Huang's mother is a monster. Indifferent to Xi'er's pain at being forced into the Huang household upon her father's death, Huang's mother renames Xi'er "Hongxi" 紅喜, or "red happiness," and says that "auspicious signs have arrived." She makes Xi'er her chambermaid, promising Xi'er good food and clothing that she had never had from her father.[40] Yet, when Xi'er serves her lotus soup that is "too hot," the old woman jabs Xi'er's mouth with sharp-pointed opium pipe sticks. She later orders the pregnant Xi'er to be sold on Huang's wedding night. If Huang sexually defiles Xi'er, then his mother imposes on her yet further physical and emotional abuse. In Xi'er's own words, "I suffer day and night, and I can only swallow my tears."[41] The image of Huang's mother evokes the predatory old woman whose exhaustion of feminine fertility terrorizes young lives in folk culture.[42]

The music of the opera further connects popular Buddhism with old and evil women like Huang's mother. The opera has been upheld as a model that combines Western performance art with various forms of folk music. The musicians used different styles of music to express class distinctions. In representing Huang's mother, they chose (1) tunes to which Buddhist women in Hebei chanted popular Buddhist scriptures and tales, and (2) monastic Buddhist music pieces from Mount Wutai (Wutai shan 五台山), the famous Buddhist pilgrimage center in Shanxi Province. They did so on the premise that Buddhist musical pieces "all fit the status of the landlords."[43] In scenes in which Xi'er suffers abuses at the hands of Huang's mother, the musicians played the tunes of a well-known children's song in northern China, "The Cabbage" (Xiao baicai 小白菜), which assumes the sad voice of a girl crying over her miserable life with a malignant stepmother.[44] The class-minded selection of music intended to plant in the audience's mind an innate connection between Buddhist practices and the exploitation of the landlord class. Be it the worship of Buddha or of a female deity, the opera depicts traditional religious practices as something akin to Huang's mother, a cruel and hypocritical old woman. Religion represents the evil of the landlord class.

5. Two Girls in a Parallel Narrative of Salvation

The female body is a prominent didactic tool to reify religious and ideological doctrines. Despite the opera's intentional denunciation of traditional religions, many Chinese—educated or illiterate, urban or rural—would recognize the familiar trope in the opera's theme of female suffering and salvation. Since the arrival of Buddhism in China in the first century, the female body had been inherently associated with defilement and sin. Women were condemned to an afterlife in the Blood Pond Hell because the blood they shed in menstruation and childbirth were believed to pollute the world and offend the gods. In religious lore and ritual operas, the Buddhist monk Mulian 目連 emerges as the heroic savior. Relying on blessings from the Buddha and "the mighty spiritual power of the assembled monks," he delivers his own wicked mother and all mothers from hellish sufferings to heavenly bliss.[45] In popular literature, a pious maiden often experiences bodily pains, underworld sojourns, and banishments from her natal or marital family before she finally attains liberation and becomes a bodhisattva.[46] Since late imperial times, this kind of story, featuring suffering as the necessary condition for salvation, had become widespread among all strata of Chinese society via the circulation of "precious scrolls" (*baojuan* 寶卷), a performative genre that combines rhymed verses for singing and prose for chanting in religious rituals and entertainment.[47]

The themes of suffering and salvation were fused into the CCP narrative of revolution. Women's sin from menstruation and childbirth sinks their souls into the Blood Pond Hell, just as the landlord's predation drives Xi'er into the dark cave. The saving power of the Buddha, the "assembly of monks," and Mulian resonates with that of the Party-state, the Communist army, and soldier Dachun. Xi'er's sufferings are a precondition of her salvation, just as such sufferings conditioned the deliverance of female protagonists in popular religious stories. If piety offers the path for female salvation in traditional stories, then Xi'er's hatred of the landlord class qualifies her to receive a new life under the aegis of the Party-state. The vocabularies and expressions may have changed, but the basic logical structure persisted.

A parallel narrative of salvation is especially evident when we compare and contrast *The White-Haired Girl* with *The Precious Scroll of Xiunü* (*Xiunü baojuan* 秀女寶卷), a text on the deliverance of a pious maiden named Tao Xiunü 陶秀女 (Tao the Beautiful Girl). This anonymous text belongs to a corpus of precious scrolls that focus on female salvation in the nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries.[48] The story is set in Shanxi Province during the Sui dynasty (581–618), but the earliest edition is dated 1877.[49] It is short (one volume, in sixty-four folio pages), and has a very simple plot. Yet, as literary scholar Katherine Alexander points out, it includes an "amalgam of dramatic tropes" rich enough to equal other, much longer and more sophisticated contemporary precious scrolls on the same subject.[50]

The heroine, Tao Xiunü, is a fifteen-year-old maiden born to devout Buddhist parents. On a pilgrimage trip, two bandits kidnap her and sell her to a childless couple far away, who take her in as a concubine in the hope of gaining a male heir. Adamantly maintaining her chastity against the master's sexual advances, Xiunü suffers repeated physical assaults by the couple and is eventually beaten to death by the wife. Her ghost then tours the underworld and witnesses gruesome tortures in the ten courts of hell—each administered by a king who metes out one's punishments according to one's lifetime behavior.[51] Because of her piety, the Jade Emperor sends down Fairy Maiden He (He Xiangu 何仙姑) to rescue her. Xiunü thus comes back to life and takes her revenge. The master and wife receive corporal punishment, repent, and convert to devotional practices. The bandits are struck by thunderbolts and are forever condemned to hell. Xiunü reunites with her parents and loyal maid. After donating all the family property to a monastery, they ascend to the heavenly realm.[52]

Using the theme of female suffering and salvation, the *Precious Scrolls of Xiunü* and *The White-Haired Girl* propound radically different ideologies. One promulgates religious piety and karmic retribution; the other features class oppression. Yet the two share much in common, from characterizations to plot structures. Each sets up the image of a young woman and her family for an ideological discourse: Xiunü is a pious Buddhist who follows a vegetarian diet from birth. Her parents demonstrate Buddhist compassion by sponsoring temple constructions and providing year-round relief to the poor. Xi'er is a good daughter from a poor peasant family—the most cherished laboring class in the Communist revolution. Xi'er's father, Yang, is an archetype of the old "peasant class": landless, destitute, exploited yet unable to fight the injustice on his own. Accordingly, the two girls take a similar track of suffering and salvation:

I. Either kidnapped or sold, each is taken into an evil household by force and is subjected to the sexual predation of a male master and brutal abuse by a matriarch.

II. Each is persecuted to death, literally (Xiunü) or metaphorically (Xi'er). Each becomes a vengeful ghost and experiences a ghostly life.
III. Each is saved by an idealized savior from the higher order—the Jade Emperor's heavenly realm in the case of Xiunü and the CCP's promise of a New Society in the case of Xi'er.

There is no evidence that the Communist cultural workers intentionally emulated any stories from popular religions in general, or from the *Precious Scrolls of Xiunü* in particular. Whatever these stories have in common, it must be coincidental, or at least unconscious. It is the concurrence itself that is telling. Despite the drastically different and even openly antagonistic ideologies, the religious and CCP discourses of salvation concur in their deep structure.

Of course, the differences are equally significant. First, since the *Precious Scroll of Xiunü* was about female religious cultivation and hence targeted mainly female audiences, a female deity such as Fairy Maiden He takes up the savior role. She represents the final ideal of female cultivation for Xiunü and all devotional women, yet she comes to the rescue by the decree of the Jade Emperor—the patriarchal authority in a celestial bureaucracy. The rhetoric of class struggle, by contrast, calls for the might of the Red Army and the Communist Party to repel the class enemies. The playwrights, all members of the male CCP elite, wrote for the rural population who lived largely by patriarchal cultural norms. In saving Xi'er, Dachun serves as both an epitome of the Party-state and a role model for all peasant soldiers. It is through the masculinist vigor of the soldier, the army, and the Party-state that the feminized peasants are to be saved from class oppression and led into the New Society. Despite the gender differences between the two saviors, both stories uphold a male-dominated social, political, and cosmological order.

Second, the two stories present female sexuality differently; each presentation serves its own didactic purposes at the expense of simple logic. The most vocal criticism of *The White-Haired Girl*'s internal inconsistencies came from Yan'an's own drama critic, Zhang Jichun 張季純 (1907–2000), in July 1945. Zhang pointed out the implausibility of father Yang's suicide over his guilt at selling Xi'er, since the rural poor customarily sold daughters to pay off family debts. Zhang believed that this unrealistic plot changed the initial conflict between a landlord and a tenant to the matter of a landlord's sexual exploitation of a poor girl; thus, the opera evaded the vital issue of landownership in rural society. Moreover, the sexual exploitation theme was not convincing.

Zhang asked: why did Huang rush to bring Xi'er into his house on the Lunar New Year Day—would not a girl (or anyone) in mourning be an extremely inauspicious presence for any household on such a festive occasion? It was even more inexplicable that after having rushed her into his house, Huang did not find an opportunity to rape Xi'er until several months later: Huang's mother must have been quite benign because she efficiently shielded Xi'er from her son's sexual advances for a long time.[53] For Zhang, the rape of Xi'er is a necessary scene to illustrate the evil of the landlord class and an essential catalyst of her suffering, but the opera's theme of sexual exploitation was built on illogical foundations.

The *Precious Scroll of Xiunü* takes a different approach to the issue of rape, but it has similar plot flaws. The narrative must establish Xiunü's exemplary piety; that is, despite the physical abuse she suffers around the clock, she manages to maintain her sexual purity simply by "reciting the name of Buddha."[54] Here, some of Zhang's criticisms of *The White-Haired Girl* could very well be applied to the story of Xiunü. If the man and wife bought Xiunü for the sheer purpose of acquiring a male heir, and if they were capable of repeatedly beating her, why could they not simply use force to consummate the final sexual act? Vice versa, if Xiunü could escape rape by "reciting the name of Buddha," why wouldn't this same strategy protect her from other abuses? The narrative sacrifices basic logic to support the idea of Xiunü's piety.

As the saving power of the Party and of Mao became increasingly radicalized over time, the character of Xi'er gradually attained Xiunü's attributes on sexual purity. In the original stories of the White-Haired Girl, the poor woman survives in the wilderness with her baby girl. The 1945 opera initially kept this detail—but Xi'er emerges from the cave with a *son*. This detail suggests that the reason Huang abandons Xi'er is not due to the traditional bias against girls; rather, it is because of the exploitative nature of the landlord class. In the 1950 film, the baby dies shortly after birth. With the rising importance of class antagonism, "a peasant cannot love a landlord, a worker cannot love a capitalist; between them there is only hatred."[55] No room is left for a mixed-blood product of oppressor and oppressed.

Xi'er's sexuality underwent further purification during the Cultural Revolution. In the 1972 ballet version, the rape never happens, and Xi'er successfully escapes after putting up a heroic fight against Huang's sexual assault. As literary scholar Meng Yue argues, by 1972, "Xi'er's body and sexuality have completely faded from the story" and have become a mere abstract symbol of the peasant class.[56] Like Xiunü, she would endure all manner of other bodily

sufferings, but her sexuality is reserved for the purity of the peasant class, and it only returns when she reunites with Dachun. Such a reunion realizes the traditional romantic ideal of "all's well that ends well for two people in love"; at the same time, it expresses the ideological unity between the peasant class and the Party. In the olden times, when Xiunü's story unfolded, patriarchy delivered female suffering to the Jade Emperor's heavenly realm; in Xi'er's day, it delivers female suffering to the Maoist revolution. The unpolluted female body is a necessary tribute to patriarchal power, and female chastity remains an offering on the altar.

6. The Power of Tears

A narrative of suffering and salvation is bound to elicit intense emotions. As historians and religious studies scholars have demonstrated, emotions such as love, hatred, joy, anger, and shame play crucial roles in creating, shaping, or altering beliefs. They inform one's moral judgments and motivate religious action as well as political or cultural revolution.[57] Public displays and discussions of emotions are culturally and historically conditioned, reflecting one's commitment to what historian Barbara Rosenwein defines as an "emotional community." Like social, religious, or political communities, emotional communities are "groups of people animated by common or similar interests, values, and emotional styles and valuations."[58] In other words, emotions generate power dynamics of social bonding.

Tears and weeping are of particular significance in shaping beliefs and forming emotional communities. Historian Jacqueline van Gent shows the critical role of tears in helping the eighteenth-century Moravian missionaries to convert the Inuit people in western Greenland. An indigene reached the "awakening" moment when she wept over the personal experiences of Jesus's suffering and his love, so that the indigene would fully submit to the Christian faith and to the authority of missionaries. With the same language of love, the missionaries "shamed" indigenous religious leaders and shamans into "a loss of social standing and power."[59] Through tears, the missionaries formed an emotional community with the converts and asserted moral authority over the indigenes.

In China, a similar emotive approach harks back to early medieval times. Buddhist preaching overwhelmed the audience with fear of hell and promise of joy in the Pure Land, the blissful world free of all sufferings. As

their "heart and body shiver" and "tears of anxiety rush forth in streams," entire congregations were converted.[60] Crying, both individually and collectively, also bonded master Zhengyan 証嚴 with her followers in the modern Buddhist Tzu Chi (*Ciji* 慈濟, Compassion Relief) movement. Many women in Taiwan join the movement's humanitarian charity works because they found an emotional connection with the master's charismatic power derived from her spirit of universal love.[61] For adepts in the transnational religious movement of the Way of Pervading Unity (*Yiguandao* 一貫道), training sessions regularly "catalyzed into an unrestrained expression of emotions and most adepts burst into contagious tears encouraging one another to keep on striving."[62] In general, village festivals and opera performances are occasions to provoke rich and complex emotions in celebrating divine powers. Heightened senses created emotional communities that contributed to the common foundation of village moral and political order.[63]

The CCP propaganda created a new emotional community for the revolution. Mao prescribed a class-determined theory of human nature and emotions in *Mao's Talks*: "Nowhere in the world does there exist love or hatred without cause or reason." He then demanded that all expressions of emotion in Communist literature and arts must happen in the framework of class antagonism.[64] The CCP's political campaigns followed this affective trajectory. Elizabeth Perry shows that, in the 1940s and 1950s, the CCP was apt to mobilize collective emotions through staging public performances. Such performances created emotional experiences of hatred, indignation, and revenge against class enemies, and they effectively unified people from all walks of life for the Communist cause.[65] Political scientist Liu Yu demonstrates that in building mass belief in the Communist system during the PRC period, the CCP routinely held political rituals among peasants and workers to produce emotive senses of victimhood and class hatred.[66] Emotion thus constituted the very heart of the CCP's making of power.

Perhaps no other propaganda work generated as much of an outpouring of emotions as *The White-Haired Girl* did. In both Yan'an and the new "liberated areas," Party newspapers emphasized that the opera was about reinforcing "class education" and elevating "class awareness."[67] Phrases such as "deeply moved," "profoundly touched," "moved to tears," "crying uncontrollably," and "irrepressible hatred against the landlords" appeared in almost all reports and memoirs by audience members as well as performers. Ding Ling's recollection in 1983 echoed a Party newspaper report in 1946: "Every performance emptied villages and alleys. People came along with their elders and

young kids. They were all over, on top of roofs, walls, trees, and hay piles. The sorrowful story and the melancholic music moved everyone in the audience. Some had tears streaming all over their faces, and some covered their faces weeping. The fire of anger was contained in every body's heart."[68] Jack Belden verified the authenticity of the feelings by noting the same outburst of tears when he witnessed the opera being performed for a rural audience. Toward the end of the show, many from the audience jumped out to shout at landlord Huang: "Sha! Sha! Kill him! Kill him!"[69] Precisely because the tears were authentic, the opera efficiently brought the rural audience into a common emotional community against class enemies.

The emotional community shared the sentiments of anger and class hatred and the narrative of victimization. Many connected their own experiences with poverty to the exploitation that characters in *The White-Haired Girl* suffered at the hand of Huang. One man, who was reported to have sold his own daughter in the past, noted, "Now we have the Communist Party, and we poor people have been liberated!" Another man wrote, "The Old Society drives people to death, and the New Society gives life to people. Now everybody in the Border Region has been liberated!"[70] Party propaganda was apt to couch the will of the Party as expressions of the people's own words. These expressions reinforced a shared sense of victimization and liberation once they were disseminated among the soldiers and rural audiences.

The strategy of emotionally narrating victimization was supposed to empower the rural audience—in particular, young male peasants; the intent was that they would identify with the role of Dachun, join the army, and take the task of Xi'er's revenge upon themselves. In a widely publicized anecdote about a performance in 1946, a young soldier was so provoked with anger that he took out his gun and aimed it at the actor playing Huang on stage. He was stopped while crying out, "I want to kill him!" From then on, as legend has it, all troops had to have bullets unloaded from their guns before they watched the opera.[71] However, such discretion did not prevent propaganda troupes from staging a highly sensational struggle session at the end of every show. This staged session often evolved into a full-scale mass struggle meeting among the audience. In shouting "Down with Huang Shiren!" and "Revenge for Xi'er," the ritual on and off stage converged on the theme of class hatred. The audience became part of the *yang* force that would redeem both Xi'er and themselves from the old society (Figure 8.2).

Such a strong sense of self-identification and self-empowerment among rural audiences made *The White-Haired Girl* a powerful propaganda weapon

Figure 8.2 The struggle session against landlord Huang on stage. *Renmin huabao* 人民畫報 1, no. 2 (August) 1950.

in the late 1940s. The CCP land reform teams adopted the opera as an essential component of mass mobilization. Once they had villagers emotionally engaged with the drama on stage, the teams would hold a mass meeting of "speaking of bitterness" against the landlords in their own villages.[72] The opera was also a must-see for CCP soldiers across the entire country during the Civil War. Army commanders and political officers lauded the fact that "one performance of the opera works better than three months' political education."[73] Due to the impact of the opera, it was reported that numerous captured GMD soldiers—who were mostly from poor families—reneged and joined the Communist army.[74] They joined the Party cause essentially by having joined the emotional community.

Tears washed away impurities and guilt in the consciousness of members from other social classes and converted them into the revolutionary cause. In Party media, the opera propelled the urban educated who had joined the revolution to learn about class hatred in the countryside and to criticize their own "petty bourgeoisie" tendencies. Tears motived them to undertake "responsibility" to free the Chinese peasants from "the GMD reactionaries."[75] Many members of the propaganda troupes were either students or actors from old-style opera troupes. They were reported to have cried on stage, immersing themselves in the peasant characters they were supposed to

perform. Zhang Geng 張庚 (1911–2003), who chaired Luyi's theater department, recalled in 1962 that he had watched as many shows as possible in Yan'an, in the liberated cities of Zhangjiakou 張家口 and Baoding 保定, and then in Beijing after 1949. He had cried every time he watched it.[76] Whether genuine or performative, the tears of the propaganda workers supposedly revealed their true selves and marked their self-conscious identification with the Party's discourse of class struggle. The Party's emotional community continued to grow.

Such tears were supposed to transform the old military and cultural elites as well as the general populace in the cities. In 1949, some of the opera's first urban-elite audience were GMD generals and high-ranking officers who had just peacefully handed Beijing over to the CCP army. The opera's director and actors panicked when a gimmick they had used successfully for rural audiences met with a deadly silence rather than laughter. Yet, when the show progressed to the death of Xi'er's father and to Xi'er's misery in the Huang house, the anxious crew heard the growing sound of sobbing and weeping, until "the entire theater was overwhelmed with an atmosphere of grief and indignation." After the show, many officers allegedly "examined the crimes they had previously committed against the people and pledged to reform themselves" for the New China.[77] In Shanghai, the opera's first show only sold seven or eight tickets in a theater with over one thousand seats. Presumably, the show moved these few audience members so much that it quickly sold out for a month from the next day. The performances gave rise to several adaptations by local opera troupes in the Shanghai area, and prompted some renowned movie stars to join CCP propaganda troupes.[78] Party media showed that emotions helped the CCP conquer not only the rural poor but also the urbanites and even some of the CCP's former enemies in the GMD.

Foreign observers confirmed that the public outpouring of emotions was not mere Party media's coercion or exaggeration. American sinologist Derk Bodde (1909–2003) watched the show in Communist Beijing on April 28, 1949. He highly praised the opera's artistic achievements, but questioned the show as a realistic portrayal of rural life and disapproved of its explicit embrace of mob violence. Nevertheless, Chinese audiences might not share his reservations. He remarked that the show had run for over a month, an "exceptionally long time for Peking [Beijing]," and that it had attracted people from all walks of life: "Emotionally, they were completely one with the play and, during tense moments, roared their disapproval of the landlord, shouted advice to the heroine, and cheered the arrival of the Eighth Route Army."[79]

In Shanghai, American journalists Lynn (1921–2012) and Amos Landman (1915–2005) reported that the opera was sold out for "the entire five months" in 1949. The couple watched it along with "a fair cross-section of Shanghai":

> As the action unfolded, something utterly unprecedented occurred in the theater. The obbligato of melon-seed cracking, tea sipping, whispering, coughing, giggling, and spitting halted and the audience sat rapt. More, they became participants in the drama. They wept when the old peasant chronicled his woes; they cried out in pain when the landlord's mother pierced the girl's tongue for her failure to prepare lotus-seed soup to her taste; they cursed the landlord for his lechery; and the sweet-faced woman beside us applauded frantically, almost dropping her baby in the process, when the girl slapped the landlord's mother before fleeing. The audience shouted greetings to the "liberating" soldiers and called out hao! hao!—good, good—when the heroine was awarded land.[80]

If notions of "landlord," "peasant," and "class exploitation" were still abstract to urban life, then experiences of watching the opera successfully immersed the urban audience in an emotionally charged class education and inspired their moral support for the revolution.

Finally, many sources recall that when the show premiered in Yan'an at the Party's congress in April 1945, Mao and the entire Party Central crew were "moved to tears" and gave the show a standing ovation.[81] Some even claimed that the leaders shed their tears at the moment the chorus sang out, "The Old Society turned people into ghosts, and the New Society turns ghosts back into people"—despite the fact that this line was not written into the opera script until late 1945 when the playwrights revised the opera in Zhangjiakou.[82] The myth that Mao and the Party leaders wept at the opera holds more significance for the revolution than the truth itself. The tears humanized Mao and the Party elite, showing them to have felt the sufferings of the people. It showed them standing on the same moral ground in defense of the victimized as former military rivals, political sympathizers, and indeed all sorts of members of the cultural elite. The shared expressions of victimization and empathy justified the CCP leadership. The opera thus contributed to building a new power hierarchy in the emotional community of the revolution.

It was through the power of tears that the Party interacted with the people and asserted itself as the new moral authority. In the traditional moral order,

gods and goddesses delivered heavenly justice. Now people counted on the Party. Some recalled that after watching the first rehearsal, an angry army cook indignantly complained, "The play's all right, but not to shoot that evil bastard Huang Shiren—that's just too unjust."[83] It is merely a natural course of development that the playwrights initially had Huang Shiren arrested to keep the ending in line with wartime United Front policies. In the face of popular demand, however, the writers received an order from the Party Central to have Huang executed.[84] Huang's death seamlessly combined a Party policy shift with popular demand, making the Party the de facto representative of the people's will.

An article published in the Party newspaper, now under the new title of *People's Daily* (*renmin ribao* 人民日報), in February 1947 hits home on how tears inspired a gendered articulation of the CCP power over the people. The article assumes the voice of a traditional woman, a certain Liu Xiuzhen 劉秀珍, who "has always stayed inside the home, followed the principles of 'three obediences and four virtues' (*sancong side* 三從四德), and believed in the simple karmic return of good deeds." *The White-Haired Girl* awakens her, she writes, makes her cry, and inspires her hatred of the exploiting class. She then declares:

> The so-called bodhisattvas, living Buddhas . . . are nothing but the ruling class's tools to exploit people. . . . [The real saviors of human sufferings] are not whatever religion of vegetarian diet and chanting Buddha, but the Communist Party that works for people's interests. It is not Jesus, Śākyamuni, or the Living Buddha of Crazy Ji. It is the Great Revolutionary Teacher—Mao Zedong![85]

The woman, as the Party's designated embodiment of the Chinese people, had been trapped in the traditional moral and religious system until she personally experienced Xi'er's suffering and salvation. In tears, she attains her own "awakening" moment and submits herself to the patriarchal benevolence of the Party and of Mao Zedong. She is thus inducted into the Maoist emotional community.

A gendered discourse of salvation lay at the heart of CCP propaganda. We see many parallels between Woman Bai's tragic death in Chapter 2 and Xi'er's sufferings. In both cases, the propaganda used the female body as a political metaphor for the sufferings of the people. Each aroused public rage and stimulated action. Each ended with a public trial/struggle session, during which the evil man was crushed and the Party's moral and legal authority was established. In newspaper reports and on stage, Party propaganda placed the symbolic image of the young woman between the two masculine forces of good and evil. The Party saved the people by saving the woman.

In shifting from opposition to superstition to national liberation, however, the gendered narrative also changed. Female chastity served as a political index of the CCP's ideological ranking of the revolution's enemies. The anti-superstition discourse aimed to transform both the female reproductive body and the problematic manhood of shamans for the social-economic well-being of the nascent Party-state. In the new discourse of class struggle, the CCP moved its rhetorical focus from female reproductive potential to sexual purity. Compared to the lenient disposition of the shaman Yang, the landlord Huang's rape of Xi'er fuels the fire of class hatred that sends him to his death on the execution ground. Like the Japanese invaders, the landlord class must be destroyed in the new political reality created by the Civil War and land reform.

The trope of the female ghost also constitutes new symbolic meaning. Party propaganda resorted to the same religious lore that it had attacked to establish the CCP's own historical mandate. From a female deity to be worshipped to a ghost to be saved, Xi'er's bodily sufferings are framed in the language of class struggle, symbolizing peasants' collective rejection of traditional religious-political authorities. By leading an army to repel class enemies and delivering the suffering Chinese people into a new utopian world, the Party and Mao emerged as the new exorcistic masters for all times.

During the Civil War and the period of land reform, both *The Marriage of Young Blacky* and *The White-Haired Girl* thrived as key artistic tools in CCP's mass mobilization of society. They represented the different forays that Party propaganda had made into the lives and minds of millions of ordinary Chinese to broaden support for the revolution. How these two works used and inverted the gendered power of religion speaks to the extraordinary depth and sophistication of the propaganda effort of CCP cultural workers, one that far surpassed its GMD competitor in mobilizing the masses to support its political cause.[86]

9
Conclusion

Religion mattered in the Chinese revolution. The mass line principle, the Rectification mechanisms, and *Mao's Talks* constituted the foundation of Maoist revolutionary politics. As innovative methods of ideological remolding, they were designed in the Yan'an period to consolidate the Party's absolute leadership. Yet in this volume I have shown that, from confession meetings and public trials to temple fair exhibitions and performances of ghost stories, and more besides, traditional religious constructs provided the Party with an indispensable scaffolding on which to develop and implement its innovations in ideological control among the rural masses. The *yin* and *yang* categories that sustained the traditional gender hierarchy were redirected to undergird the Party's propaganda rhetoric to displace old ritual authorities in rural society. By framing the female body and female suffering in the traditional cosmic discourse of ritual exorcism, the CCP propaganda injected the masses with a new hegemonic vision of the Party-state endowed with both scientific potency and the heavenly mandate. The propaganda thus drafted powerful concepts derived from religion and gender into the service of the revolution, from the social reforms in Yan'an to the land reform and Civil War on the national stage.

The interplay of religion, gender, and revolution testifies to a dialectical process of cultural production that belies common perceptions of Communist propaganda as mere top-down indoctrination schemes. In this regard, the CCP's subliminal yet ingenious utilization of religion offers a different dimension to the scholarly debate on the "Yan'an Way," which used to revolve around the question of which was stronger, the democratic or the authoritarian tendencies of the mass line principle in Mao's New Democratic Culture. Research in the last three decades has complicated the debate by arguing that, regardless of its inclinations, the revolutionary state in the Yan'an period was simply not yet strong enough to assert authoritarian control over local society. The Party had to frequently readjust its policies to

accommodate local conditions.[1] The Yan'an anti-shaman campaign further illustrates that between the Party-state's authoritarian actions and democratic promises, there was much wiggle room for the cultural workers and rural masses to maneuver the propaganda on their own terms. The mass line requisite of "come from the masses and go to the masses" also impelled cultural workers to actively engage with the old cultural categories. Propaganda aimed to reshape these categories yet to different degrees, for, as we have seen in this volume, it also had to submit to being shaped by them. The Party's reforms of old customs and old art and literature generated constant negotiations beneath the superficial hegemony imposed from above.

Propaganda would not work if it failed to sufficiently heed to local religious culture. In 1945, for instance, CCP artists reworked the old iconographic forms of the kitchen god and his entourage to produce two New Year prints, featuring the labor hero Wu Manyou in one and a "A Happy Family" (*quanjiafu* 全家福) in another, both celebrating the Party's promise of rural prosperity. But the prints did not sell. On the one hand, the "superstitious" masses did not take the image to be the kitchen god. On the other, those who had been "enlightened" by the anti-superstition education questioned why the government sold such "superstitious" images in the first place.[2] In the newly "liberated areas" of northern China, the propaganda troupes had to mediate the appetites among rural audiences for shows with "lewd," "feudal," and "superstitious" content. Some villagers even used the revolutionary rhetoric and rituals that they had learned from the cultural workers to demand these shows.[3] In order to forge effective and affective ties with the rural masses, the propaganda machine was compelled to accommodate before it could indoctrinate.

The Yan'an experience also brings the hitherto neglected Communist cultural workers into the discussion of elite religiosity in modern China. In this volume we have found that an overall decline of personal commitment did not preclude the CCP cultural workers from making sustained efforts to collect, discuss, and reappropriate religious knowledge. As we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, the anti-superstition campaign relied on gathering and reinterpreting "ethnographic" information about local religious and ritual practices. In Chapters 5 through 8, many cultural workers were personally interested in watching, performing, and circulating ghost stories as they refuted the existence of ghosts and spirits. They also utilized religious vocabularies and ritual formats to connect with the people. While locally based cadres and folk artists operated as knowledge masters (Chapters 5 and 7), those better educated

yet less informed "outsiders" purposely misrepresented or unknowingly misconstrued local practices for varying propaganda effects (Chapters 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8). Depending on their social positions, proclaimed goals, and local circumstances, the cultural workers' personal engagement with religious culture greatly shaped how the Party instilled new knowledge among the rural masses.

Under the grand Maoist scheme to "Serve the People," CCP propaganda deployed religion to inspire pathos, ethos, and logos for the revolution. Unbeknown to themselves, the cultural workers made religion a critical component of the Party's Yan'an legacy.

Religion, Mass Mobilization, and the Maoist PRC

Juggling between Marxist-Maoist ideological concerns and wartime expediencies, the anti-shaman campaign was short-lived (just two years, 1944 and 1945), geographically limited (the SGN Border Region), and narrowly focused (on male shamans and ritual healing). Yet it shaped mass politics in the Maoist PRC on several accounts. First, the campaign allowed the Party to hone its organizational mechanisms of mass mobilization and thought reform against the enemy "other." In the subsequent Civil War and other political campaigns on the national level, shamans were conceived as mere subsidiary allies of the more prominent enemies of the revolution, namely, rural landlords, urban capitalists, and the GMD state and army.[4] Nevertheless, by the 1960s, mass meetings, public trials, struggle sessions, and confession rituals, all of which characterized the Yan'an anti-shaman campaign, had evolved into national measures to be deployed against all sorts of enemies of the revolution on an everyday basis. The campaign mechanisms long outlasted the campaign itself.

Second, religion continued to generate dialectical dynamics of propaganda production. Throughout the Maoist PRC, the CCP reforms to the old arts and literature met with discontent and resistance not only from folk artists and people. Elite culture circles never ceased to debate the values of ghost operas (*guixi* 鬼戲) and tales of the strange (*zhiguai* 志怪). The socialist theater frequently staged immortals, ghosts, and spirits from the old genres to feature in the new peasant struggles against class oppression.[5] "Ox-demons and snake-spirits," terms Mao borrowed from traditional operas, became a standard label for class enemies during the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76.[6]

Meanwhile, official media could not monopolize discourse about ghosts and spirits. "The Green Corpse" that lurked on the first pages of this book was not an isolated event. Plenty of "talking toads," "chinless ghosts," and "hairy water demons" roamed in the underbrush of the Maoist landscape. They embodied fears, concerns, and resentments that Party propaganda was obliged but unable to suppress.[7] The persistence of ghosts and spirits in the Maoist era speaks volumes about the unsettling relationships between the people and the Party-state.

Third, religion became an even more essential toolkit as propaganda workers were charged with transforming Mao and the Party into new objects of piety. By the time of the Cultural Revolution, much traditional religious knowledge, whether from texts, rituals, or bodily practices, had been shunned. The CCP's radical campaigns had driven the propaganda force and the population at large into willy-nilly atheists, or what Goossaert defines as "sceptics."[8] In the meantime, neither May Fourth values nor Marxist atheism could feed on the increasing demand for personal and public devotion to the Mao cult. Political imperatives transformed most propaganda workers into Maoist "fundamentalists," who subliminally connected to the recourse of traditional cosmology and demonology.

In light of this development, the 1945 creation of *The White-Haired Girl* denoted a watershed, when a model work of *Mao's Talks* actually drew on traditional religion and particularly on the tropes of ritual exorcism. While it is beyond the scope of this book to examine the intertwined themes of religion, gender, and revolution in the Maoist PRC, it is useful to see how *The White-Haired Girl* evolved through the combination of these elements into an archetypal story line of salvation that dominated the metanarrative of Maoist revolution. Maoist propaganda built on this metanarrative justified the CCP's civilizing mission of the ethnic borderlands, and supported the formation of the Mao cult.

Saving the White-Haired Girl, Saving the Ethnic Nationalities

Two examples illustrate how *The White-Haired Girl*'s archetypal story line was projected onto the CCP's civilizing mission of China's ethnic borderlands. The first is a film called *Moya Dai* 摩雅傣, released by the Shanghai Haiyan Film Studio in 1960 to celebrate the Party-state's "Democratic Reform" in the

ethnic areas.[9] The script was finished in 1958, during the onset of the Great Leap Forward (1958–60) and before the severe backlashes to the "Democratic Reform" that culminated in the Dalai Lama's exile in 1959. The title invokes an ethnic Dai term, *Moya*, for doctor, and hence a flavor of an ethnic "other." The film claimed to be based on real-life stories from Yunnan 雲南, where Dai communities believed that malicious ghosts possessed people to spread diseases and take lives, and that the possessed should be expelled to live or die in the wilderness. The film resorts to the power of medical science to help the Dai expel the "backward" custom, now under the auspices of the Han Chinese Party-state.

Chinese literary critics, including the screenwriters themselves, hailed the film as the "Dai people's *White-Haired Girl*."[10] Adhering to the story line of *The White-Haired Girl*, the film features a Han Chinese cast from Shanghai and uses the trope of "minority woman" to embody the past victimization and the CCP's subsequent salvation of the ethnic nationalities.[11] The same actress plays a Dai mother and her daughter in two different time frames. The mother in the old society resists attempted rape by a chieftain, and is then stigmatized as a ghost, exiled, and burned to death. Seventeen years later, the daughter is forced into exile again by the same chieftain, who schemes to separate her from her lover, a hardworking young Dai man. Her father dies while with her in exile, but she is saved by PLA soldiers, trains to be a doctor, and then returns to save others accused of being ghosts. The Party and army thus give her a new life.

Reflecting the United Front approach in ethnic areas, the chieftain is publicly denounced in the film, but is not executed. Yet the final scene firmly asserts a masculine vision of the Han-centered Party leadership: the female protagonist reunites with her love, who has now become a CCP cadre. They and the villagers, all dressed in traditional Dai clothes, look up to the Party secretary sent from above, notably in a Mao suit. The film ends as everybody shouts, "Long Live the Communist Party! Long Live Chairman Mao!" Like Xi'er as the feminized peasant class in *The White-Haired Girl*, the young Dai woman is a symbol of China's ethnic nationalities, whose ghostly life is dispelled by the restorative power of Mao and the Party. Ethnic men are powerless until they have joined the Han-led revolution, just like Xi'er's fiancé Dachun before he became a CCP soldier.

CCP propaganda deployed the same civilizing narrative for a second time after the PLA cracked down on the Tibetan rebellion in 1959. In 1963, the PLA's August First Film Studio issued *Serfs* (*Nongnu* 農奴), a movie shoring

up the CCP claim that it had liberated millions of Tibetan serfs from a primitive regime of feudal lords.[12] The film indicts the Tibetan masters as monsters who wantonly lock their serfs up in chains, beat them to death, and force them to pay endless debts. The serfs' prayers to Buddhist deities are never answered, and the hypocrisy of Buddhist compassion by *huofo* 活佛 (*tulkus*, "living Buddhas") makes them even worse monsters than the serf-masters. The shooting of the film was, in itself, a civilizing statement. Both the director and the screenwriter were from the Beijing-based Han cultural elite. But they recruited an acting cast of Tibetans, presumably all former serfs basing their performances on personal experience, thus lending credibility and authenticity to the film's civilizing narrative.[13]

Instead of a female symbol of suffering, the film features a young man named Jampa (Qiangba 強巴) who grows up a serf and later takes shelter as a monk in a monastery. A male protagonist as a serf and monk better served the propaganda purpose, since male monastic communities predominated Tibetan society and figured significantly in the 1959 rebellion.[14] With Jampa's experiences, the film restructures Tibetan society along class lines: for Tibetan serfs, the "trap" of monastic life offered by the hypocritical *tulkus* is their only escape from their cruel masters. Tibetan religion is thus the "opiate of the people." Rich lamas and serf-masters are class enemies (in the movie they also connive with foreign imperialist powers), whereas poor lamas and serfs are the people in the fold of the Party-state.

With the reversal of gender roles, *Serfs* still follows the archetypal story line of *The White-Haired Girl*. Jampa has been rendered mute since boyhood, after being punished for having taken a bite of food offerings on a Buddhist altar. He has had a girlfriend since childhood, Namga (Lan'ga 蘭尕), who is the first to bring him the good news about the PLA. After the PLA's arrival, Namga—the female equivalent of Dachun—returns as a CCP cadre and guides the wounded Jampa out of the monastery. Under a Mao portrait and surrounded by mass chants of "Long Live the Communist Party," Jampa miraculously regains his voice—just as Xi'er regains her life after emerging from the cave. His first words are "Chairman Mao!" The message is clear: while the evil serf system had silenced innocent Tibetans for thousands of years, now—thanks to Chairman Mao—the Tibetans have finally recovered their voice and reclaimed their humanity.

As in *The White-Haired Girl*, the film supplants Tibetan religious icons with Mao as the sun. Jampa's first hope to escape suffering comes from Namga's passionate statement:

> In the east there rises the reddest sun, and on the sun stands the most august bodhisattva who can see everything. He sees that on this highest place on earth, some people are bearing the greatest sufferings. As soon as the bodhisattva points here with his finger, the army of the bodhisattva crosses thousands of mountains and rivers and comes to save we people from our great sufferings.[15]

The reference to the *reddest* sun imposes a Han political ethos onto Tibetan cultural sensibilities. While the Han culture honors the color red, and by this time the revolution had made the red sun a key political symbol, Tibetans abhor the color because of its deep associations with blood and blood sacrifice, thus making the image of a red sun, in Tibetan eyes, a horrific sight.[16] For many Tibetans, the reference was perhaps a timely metaphor for a gruesome reality. For the filmmakers, however, it served to replace the deep-seated religious icons in Tibetan life with the image of Mao as a liberator who frees the ethnic nationalities from historical sufferings and leads them to the promised land of (Han-defined) socialism. Not surprisingly, in the same way that *The White-Haired Girl* became a red classic touting peasant liberation, *Serfs* has sustained the standard CCP narrative of the old Tibet up until today.[17]

Toward the Cult of Mao

Within Han-majority China, tensions increasingly grew between the Party's dual commitments to transforming old customs and establishing Party hegemony. The practices that the CCP fought in the Yan'an period—superstition, the old marriage system, unhygienic customs—persisted into Maoist times. Zhao Shuli's *The Marriage of Young Blacky*, and its many adaptations in dramas and local operas, remained popular.[18] But the social practices reflected by his work were increasingly couched in terms of class struggle. The ups and downs of Zhao's writing career after the 1950s, and his eventual demise, were largely caused by his unwillingness to make his peasant characters idealized heroes for the Party-state's ideological indoctrination. Party propaganda now needed symbolic ideals like those in *The White-Haired Girl* to represent the peasant and landlord classes, not Zhao's "in-the-middle" characters straying from the beaten path of redemption.

Zhao also had no control over how Party propaganda would reproduce his work. In the opera version of his story, produced by the Central Academy

of Drama in 1953, the young woman Xiaoqin becomes a protagonist equal to Young Blacky. The couple thanks Chairman Mao and the Communist Party, rather than the county chief, as in Zhao's original, for their marriage.[19] In the 1964 film, when pressed by her mother's arranged marriage proposal, Xiaoqin runs to Young Blacky, now a larger-than-life hero from the militia, and pleads with him: "Please take me with you, wherever you go."[20] Here Xiaoqin becomes another Xi'er, a potential victim longing to be saved by Young Blacky, who, just like Dachun, represents the Party as the savior. Meanwhile, the village hooligans receive orders from an invisible "Second Uncle" to sabotage village politics on behalf of "Jiang Jieshi and the GMD reactionaries." A once village-level conflict over romance and marriage is transformed into the class struggle between the CCP and GMD. Zhao's original message against superstition was sidelined, and his kind of religious knowledge was no longer useful.

The White-Haired Girl itself underwent changes from the 1950s to the 1970s. In the 1972 film of this model opera, the White-Haired Girl is led out of the dark cave by the Communist soldier Dachun just as the rising sun lights up the landscape, accompanied by the chorus: "The sun has risen! The sun is Mao Zedong! The sun is the Communist Party!"[21] The public trial against landlord Huang ensues, and after three loud gunshots signaling Huang's execution, the young peasant men and women rejoice: "Long Live the Communist Party! Long, Long Live Chairman Mao!" The final scene features soldiers and peasants singing and dancing in unison under the red sun: "Beloved Chairman Mao, People's Great Savior!"[22] None of these lines, except for "the sun has risen," existed in the versions before 1953, when the playwrights used the imagery of the ghost and the sun to *allude* to the old and new systems. By 1972, the opera had become explicitly about Mao as a messianic savior who expels all dark forces and establishes heaven on earth. The writers, artists, and audiences were all expected to become fundamental believers in the Mao cult.

The metaphoric meanings of the red sun shining upon China's historical darkness fuses the opera with other prominent works in the Maoist metanarrative of the revolution. The most famous is "The East Is Red," a Shaanbei-folk-song-turned-Cultural-Revolution-anthem eulogizing Mao as the Great Savior. Under the same title of "The East Is Red" is a two-hour-long song-and-dance epic in 1964, which stages the history of modern China as a liberation from suffering under the leadership of Mao and the CCP.[23] By this time, propaganda proliferated based on the archetypal narrative of

The White-Haired Girl. This propaganda stoked the tendency to feminize, victimize, or emasculate the images of peasants, ethnic nationalities, or the people to mobilize the masses to embrace the supreme power of the Party and Mao. The archetypical story line of *The White-Haired Girl* shows how religion was not so much shunned as it defined the Maoist discourse of revolution.

Religion and Revolution in Comparative Perspectives

The discovery of religion in Communist propaganda calls for new comparative understandings of religion and politics. First, what is the heuristic value of the concept of "political religion" for the study of China? European historians have proposed this concept for the study of totalitarian regimes and personality cults. They insist on a fundamental distinction between traditional religion and political religion: the former draws on external sources of transcendence and supports genuine belief, whereas the latter relies on the state's instrumentalist manipulation of mass movement and mass media in the name of the people.[24] They argue that, despite the similarities, traditional religion and political religion take separate tracks in the modern world.

The concept of political religion, as applied to Western cases, seems inadequate to explain the Chinese experience. China scholars have demonstrated how Maoism and the Mao cult should be understood as a modern phenomenon that was deeply entangled in the twentieth-century reconfiguration of imperial traditions.[25] This volume goes further in making the case of how traditional religious culture shaped Maoist mass propaganda and mass line politics. Despite the Party's atheist claims, gendered narratives of exorcism, devotion, and salvation remained central to the CCP construction of a sacralized Party-state. In particular, the quintessential symbol of Mao as the red sun resonated with many traditional elements, ranging from red as the color of exorcism, festivity, and revolution, to the sun as a cosmic generating force in popular culture, esoteric teachings, and local myths.[26] But how the symbol was deployed to bolster the Mao cult has no historical precedents. The emperor was not worshipped, nor had the Chinese worshipped any god(s) so exclusively as they did Mao. The propaganda acted upon existing resources, including resources that an atheist Party was overtly "trashing," to create things anew. We cannot separate traditional religion from the sacralization of the Party-state.

Nor were appeals to religion only instrumental for political ends. Even during the radical Cultural Revolution, the propaganda was still an "interactive process" subjected to individual interpretations and modifications.[27] The CCP's use of religious resources involved *conscious* as well as *unconscious* efforts. Messages delivered from the top could, in the process, be reinterpreted, compromised, or lost for good. Furthermore, as this volume has shown, the gendered power of religion helped the propaganda to render the revolution meaningful for the masses, and, in particular, to generate collective emotions toward political actions. The propaganda was effective because the feelings and beliefs were *real*.

The Yan'an experience also invites further comparative insights into the discourse of religion in the Communist world. In the Soviet and Eastern European context, and more broadly in the Western experiences of Judeo-Christian religions, the perceived relationships between religion and revolution mainly revolves around God and the Church. Soviet and Eastern European antireligious propaganda took the Church and God as central targets for destruction. Persisting faith in God and the return of church life has, in turn, been portrayed as major indicators that religion prevails over atheism into the Soviet and Eastern European post-socialist age.[28]

The Soviet strand of Marxism had a deep impact on the CCP's ideological stand on religion. But from the Yan'an period to the 1950s, the Party followed a more moderate path than the radical Soviet style in handling religion on the ground. Using the United Front framework, the Party tried to enlist the support of the five officially recognized religions, namely, Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. The CCP initially allied with sectarian brotherhoods even while it campaigned against shamans in wartime Yan'an; only after 1949 did it move to crush all "sects and secret societies" as potential threats to the new social order. In these cases, the Party claimed to fight "feudal superstition" or "counterrevolutionary" enemies but avoided all-out attacks on the five religions per se until the Cultural Revolution.[29]

While the CCP diverted from the Soviet path in practice, the preoccupation of Soviet atheism with God and the Church may have exerted some profound yet hitherto unexplored impact on the CCP's discourse of religion. The Party's theoretical assertions about religion, which had drawn heavily on Soviet Marxism since the 1920s, tended to focus on the conflict between theism and atheism, or on whether gods, spirits, and other supernatural beings actually existed.[30] This line of propaganda dominated the Yan'an

anti-shaman campaign and has persisted in the Party's anti-superstition propaganda ever since.

The CCP's preoccupation with atheism, however, may not have destroyed Chinese religion as thoroughly as it intended to, even during the most radical times of the Maoist revolution. As historians of China have demonstrated, traditional Chinese religion never revolved around one single almighty God or a hierarchically organized clerical structure. Daoist or Buddhist teachings and monastic lives were only some of the many different ways in which Chinese people practiced or conceived religion. As this volume has shown, the foundations of Chinese religious life were built on common cosmological beliefs in *qi* and *yin-yang* that sustained an organic universe whose dynamics of change constantly traversed the boundaries between physical and spiritual worlds. A God and Church-centered atheist approach largely missed the core of traditional Chinese religion.

It is largely through the blind spots created by this God and Church-centered atheist discourse that the CCP propaganda workers deployed traditional religion for the revolution. For them, as well as for many Chinese who had immersed themselves in modernist and Communist education, religion (and superstition) was all about beliefs in gods, ghosts, and spirits. Many key concepts in traditional religion that do not connote any god or institution, such as *tian* (heaven), *di* 地 (earth), *dao* 道 (way), *taiping* (great peace), or the sun, naturally take on new meanings in Communist propaganda without being subject to atheist attacks. CCP cultural workers might reject the concepts of *qi* and *yin-yang* in a "scientific" view of the world, but as we have seen, they had a much harder time in trying to completely wipe them out from everyday cognitive and aesthetic activities, especially when they relied on them to connect the Party-state with the "people." Despite the Party's proclaimed stand of science, atheism, and a secular nation-state, religion still provided the deep patterns for the revolution.

Does the propaganda examined in this book continue to have relevance in present-day China? The market economy may have dissolved the old rhetoric of class struggle, but the saga does continue for the CCP. Seventy years after its debut in Yan'an, *The White-Haired Girl* returned to stage once more in 2015, as a direct response to Party leader Xi Jinping's "Talk at the Forum on Literature and Art" the year before.[31] The talk was part of the regime's bid

to revive both Maoist legacies and "traditional culture and faiths" for what political scientist Elizabeth Economy calls China's "Third Revolution."[32] The new show purposely premiered in Yan'an, and the cast then toured nine major Chinese cities before culminating their journey in the national capital of Beijing, thus completing the symbolic transmission of the revolutionary legacy from the "founding fathers" of the People's Republic to the new leadership of today's China. The National Opera House periodically featured the show thereafter, most recently in June 2021 for the centennial of the CCP.

On the Chinese cyberspace, however, *The White-Haired Girl* fares differently. In an online debate in 2009, female college students suggested that Xi'er should marry the landlord Huang for his money: "It would save my years of hard work to marry a rich man like Huang. . . . I can always pursue my own dreams after I have become rich"; "I can do charity and help the poor with Huang's money."[33] At least for some young women who have grown up in post-Mao times, to marry Huang for his gold is to empower themselves. Neither true love nor the Party matters, and Xi'er's suffering is rendered meaningless.

The "White-Haired Girl" resurged in public conversations in early 2022, after a video clip showing a mother chained by her neck in a farm shed went viral on Chinese social media. She is believed to be a victim of a women-trafficking industry rampant in impoverished rural regions. When neither provincial nor central authorities took any action on the crimes, angry Chinese netizens protested, many comparing the poor woman, as well as the many more victims like her, with the "White-Haired Girl." The miseries of the "White-Haired Girl" rallied public denunciations of both the social evil of women-trafficking and the callous, impotent, and corrupted political system.[34]

Can Party propaganda gauge the growing gap between the rich and the poor without the construct of class struggle in its arsenal? How will the Party-state continue its time-honored discourse of salvation in relation to the vibrant religious resurgences, on the one hand, and growing social and ethnic tensions in the new context of global politics on the other? What wonders of aesthetic politics will propaganda workers conjure in the age of social media? We may find out the answers to these questions in future chapters of China's enchanted revolution.

List of Electronic Databases

Archives of the Communist Party of China (CPC) 中國共產黨數據庫.
Hongse baokan dang'an shujuku 紅色報刊檔案數據庫.
Jindai baozhi shujuku 近代報紙數據庫, 1840–49.
KangRi zhanzheng yu jindai ZhongRi guanxi wenxian shuju pingtai 抗日戰争与近代中日关系文獻數據平台.
Mingguo tupian shujuku 民國圖片數據庫, 1911–49.
Minguo tushu shujuku 民國圖書數據庫, 1912–49.
Quanguo baokan suoyin 全國報刊索引.
Renmin ribao dianziban 人民日報電子版.
Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu hongse jiyi duomeiti ziyuanku 陝甘寧邊區紅色記憶多媒體資源庫(Shaanxi Library).
Yan'an shiqi wenxian dang'an shujuku 延安時期文獻檔案數據庫.
Zhongguo dangshi qikan shujuku 中國黨史期刊數據庫.
Zhongguo jindai tushu quanwen shujuku 中國近代圖書全文數據庫, 1840–1949.
Zhongguo zhexueshu dianzihua jihua 中國哲學書電子化計劃.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. The story was circulated orally during the Maoist era and was later published with the title *Lüse shiti* 綠色屍體 by Dongfang chubanshe 東方出版社 in 2006. The author's name is Zhang Baorui 張寶瑞 (1952–), and the entire novel can be found on many Chinese websites. See, e.g., http://www.quanben.io/n/luseshiti/list.html.
2. See Chapter 8 for detailed discussions of the opera and the relevant scholarship.
3. On studies that to different degrees have examined the role of religion in the Communist revolution, see Chen, *Making Revolution*, 100–101, 475–95; Thaxton, *China Turned Rightside Up*, 180, 192–93; Wou, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 51–97; Landsberger, "Mao as the Kitchen God"; Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 317–44; Ter Haar, "China's Inner Demons"; Perry, *Anyuan*; and Goossaert and Palmer, *Religious Question*, 170–72.
4. For 1953 as a turning point toward radical socialism in the history of the PRC, see Brown and Pickowicz, "Early Years"; and Blecher, "New Democracy." Regrettably, I finished this book before having a chance to consult Professor John Esherick's new book, *Accidental Holy Land: The Communist Revolution in Northwest China* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022).
5. For traditional Chinese religious life, see, among others, Wolf, "Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors"; Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China*; Teiser, "Spirits of Chinese Religion"; and Goossaert and Palmer, *Religious Question*, 20–41.
6. Ter Haar, "China's Inner Demons."
7. Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 105.
8. The literature is rich. See Bellah, "Civil Religion in America"; Casanova, *Public Religion*; and Berger, *Many Altars of Modernity*. On how Maoist experiences shaped the post-Mao religious revival, see Wang, *Maoism and Grassroots Religion*; and Yang, *Re-enchanting Modernity*.
9. Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, xiv–xv; Griffin, *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*.
10. Plamper, *Stalin Cult*; Lim, *Leader Symbols and Personality Cult*; Dror, "Establishing Hô Chí Mihn's Cult"; Leese, *Mao Cult*.
11. On the inherent connections between modern sciences and traditional magic and mysticism in the Western Enlightenment, see Josephson-Storm, *Myth of Disenchantment*.
12. On the use of this concept in the European context, see Roberts, " 'Political Religion.' "
13. Smolkin, *Sacred Space*, 19.
14. Slezkine, *House of Government*.

15. Yang, "Millenarianism in the Soviet Union and Maoist China."
16. Perry, *Anyuan*, 4.
17. Chen, *Making Revolution*, 100–101, 475–95; Thaxton, *China Turned Rightside Up*, 180, 192–93; Wou, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 51–97; Perry, *Anyuan*.
18. Goossaert and Palmer, *Religious Question*, 170–72.
19. Landsberger, "Mao as the Kitchen God"; Ter Haar, "China's Inner Demons," 79–85; Schoenhals, "Demonising Discourse."
20. Shue, "Regimes of Resonance."
21. Sewell, "The Concept (s) of Culture," 91–92.
22. Here I mean not only Confucian teachings but also traditional cosmology, Buddhist, Daoist, and popular religious textual, ritual, and vernacular heritages. See Yu, *State and Religion in China*; and Lagerwey, *China, A Religious State*.
23. Goossaert, "Diversity and Elite Religiosity." See also Katz and Goossaert, *Fifty Years*.
24. For a classic study of propaganda, see Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda & Persuasion*.
25. Wang, *Sublime Figure of History*, 210.
26. Mittler, *Continuous Revolution*, 10.
27. Benny, "Aesthetic Resources."
28. Schipper, *Taoist Body*, 44–55; Johnson, *Spectacle and Sacrifice*; Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare*, 1–59.
29. Johnson, *Spectacle and Sacrifice*, 9.
30. Holm, *Art and Ideology*; Jones, *Ritual and Music of North China*.
31. Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*, 118–57; Chen, "Zongjiao"; Goossaert, "1898"; Yang, "Introduction," 11–19; Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes*, 7–11, 191–226; Goossaert and Palmer, *Religious Question*, 43–89; Katz, *Religion in China*, 17–67.
32. Chen, *Zhongguo Gongchandang*, 11–20; Kuo, "Two Conceptions of Religion."
33. Chen, *Zhongguo Gongchandang*, 76–77; Goossaert and Palmer, *Religious Question*, 140–41; Knight, *Marxist Philosophy in China*, 36–37, 48–49.
34. Mao, "Peasant Movement in Hunan," 452–56.
35. Chen, *Zhongguo Gongchandang*, 28–29, 40–45.
36. Chen, *Zhongguo Gongchandang*, 29–32, 56–58.
37. Kang and Sutton, *Contesting the Yellow Dragon*, 143–48.
38. Chen, *Zhongguo Gongchandang*, 59–76.
39. Mao, "On New Democracy," 330–69.
40. Mao, "Speech on the Founding Meeting," 408–409.
41. "SGN bianqu ziran kexue yanjiuhui xuanyan," *Xin Zhonghua bao*, 2/28/1940.
42. Hu and Xiao, "Fan mixin tigang." Hu was the actual author and Xiao was chief journal editor. The article was later republished with Hu's name alone in *Hu Qiaomu wenji* 胡喬木文集, vol. 3 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1992), 274–280, and *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* 中共黨史研究 vol. 5 (1999), 1–4.
43. Hu and Xiao, "Fan mixin tigang."
44. Connell, *Masculinities*, 71–81; Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity."
45. Alter, "Celibacy, Sexuality"; Tikhonov, "Masculinizing the Nation."

46. Hinsch, *Masculinities in Chinese History*, 131–50.
47. Valussi, "Men Built Religion," 118.
48. Bailey, *Women and Gender*, 58–61; Kang, "Women and the Religious Question," 502–507; Hershatter, *Women and China's Revolutions*, 93–97; Valussi, "Men Built Religion"; Gvili, "Gender and Superstition."
49. Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes*, 191–95, 212, 222–24.
50. Prazniak, "Mao and the Women Question," 29–30; Davin, "Gendered Mao," 196–218; Kang, "Women and the Religious Question," 517–18.
51. Mao, "Peasant Movement in Hunan," 454.
52. Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures*, 245–303, esp. 250–57.
53. Hu and Xiao, "Fan mixin tigang." On the liminal masculine power of bandits, see Ownby, "Approximations of Chinese Bandits."
54. Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China*, 42–61; Von Glahn, *Sinister Way*, 98–129; Sutton, "From Credulity to Scorn," 6.
55. Male shamans appear as chief performers of this kind of ritual exorcism. See Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults*, 64–69; Sutton, *Steps of Perfection*; DeBernardi, *The Way*; and Boretz, *Gods, Ghosts, and Gangsters*. DeBernardi notes that male mediums far outnumbered female mediums because women were considered as a source of pollution offensive to the purity of gods (124, 259). But among various ethnic groups in south China, male shamans often cross-dress as women or as martial goddess in exorcistic rituals. See Katz, "Repaying a Nuo Vow," 19; Huang Jianxing 黃建興, personal communication, December 19, 2016.
56. See these performances in southeast China, Taiwan, and southeast Asia, in Sutton, *Steps of Perfection*, 124–64; DeBernardi, *The Way*, 113, 131; Boretz, *Gods, Ghosts and Gangsters*, 122–27. Similar performances in north China are briefly noted in Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 56–58; and Johnson, *Spectacle and Sacrifice*, 52–53. They are more extensively recorded in Chinese sources, such as Yao, "Minjian sheji zhong de 'mapi' chutan"; and Yang, "Jinan de Longshen chongbai."
57. Chau and Liu, "Spirit Mediumism in Shaanbei," 96–107.
58. Sutton, "From Credulity to Scorn," 25–26.
59. DeBernardi, *The Way*, 136–39, 298–305; Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China*, 42–61.
60. Anagnost, "Politics and Magic"; Weller, *Resistance, Chaos, and Control*, 79–82, 169–70.
61. For a sympathetic evaluation of the Rectification, see Selden, *China in Revolution*, 152–60. For critical views, see Chen, *Yan'an de yinying*; Apter and Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse*; Gao, *Hong taiyang*; and Cheng, *Creating the "New Man,"* 65–70.
62. Selden coined the term in 1971 to refer to the CCP's populist mobilization during the Yan'an period. In his 1995 revision, Selden insists on the democratic tendencies that contributed to CCP success in the late 1940s. Other works cited in note 61 argue for the totalitarian nature of the "Yan'an Way." Historians Pauline Keating and Xiaoping Cong argue for both the limit and success of the "Yan'an Way," using the cooperative movement and marriage reform as their respective case studies. See Selden, *China*

in Revolution, 169–258; Keating, *Two Revolutions*; and Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 175–208.

63. *Mao's Talks*, 110.
64. Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 91–94. See also Judd, "Prelude to the 'Yan'an Talks.'"
65. Mao, "Resolution of the Central Committee," June 1, 1943, 364.
66. Young, "On the Mass Line"; Lin, "Mass Line."
67. Mao, "Death in the Interests of the People," September 8, 1944, 616; Karl, "To Serve the People."
68. Selden, *China in Revolution*, 169–96; Keating, *Two Revolutions*.
69. Chen, "The Blooming Poppy."
70. On China in 1943, see Esherick, "Prologue."
71. Mao, "Question of Constitutional Government," 497.
72. Mao, "On New Democracy"; Selden, *China in Revolution*, 99–143; Dirlik, "Discourse of Chinese Marxism," 305–44; Blecher, "New Democracy," 155–59.
73. On the GMD anti-superstition campaigns in eastern coastal areas, see Nedostup, *Superstitious Regime*; and Poon, *Negotiating Religion*. On similar initiatives in Shaanxi, see *Shaanxi minzheng gaikuang*, chap. 8, 1–28. Shaanbei's impenetrable situation in the 1920s and '30s is well summarized in Seldon, *China in Revolution*, 3–64; and Keating, *Two Revolutions*, 14–34.
74. Mao, "Cultural Education Problems," 521.
75. Mao, "Oral Political Report," 838.
76. Mao, "General Policy for the United Front," 643. See also Li, "Guanyu wenjiao gongzuo de fangxiang," in *WJXB*, vol. 8, 84; Li was a gentry doctor of Chinese medicine and vice chairman of the Border Region government. He delivered this speech at the Second Meeting of the SGN Border Region Congress on December 6, 1944.
77. The CCP's Yan'an period archives are held in the Party Central Archives in Beijing, with a copy in the Shaanxi Provincial Archives. Both have been closed to the public since 2012.
78. Following the household-based Daoist tradition of ritual practices, the *yinyang* are ordinary peasants who provide ritual services to their communities as individual geomancers, spirit mediums/shamans, or in Daoist ritual performance groups in many parts of northern China. The trade is usually hereditary. See Jones, *In Search of the Folk Daoists*; and Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 56–57.
79. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 590; Winkelman, "Shamanism in Cross-Cultural Perspective."
80. Sutton, "From Credulity to Scorn," 2–3n7; Yang, "Shamanism and Spirit Possession," 52–53n1. See also Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 43–58; and Kendall, *Shamans, Housewives*, 28–29, both of whom question these distinctions in other cultures.
81. Chau and Liu, "Spirit Mediumism in Shaanbei," 96–103.
82. On *gui* as ghosts, demons, and spirits, see Pu, "Concept of Ghost," 173–91; Von Glahn, *Sinister Way*, 78–129; and Kang, *Cult of the Fox*, 73–83.
83. DeMare, *Land Wars*, esp. 72–99. See also Cohen, "Cultural and Political Inventions."
84. On the Communist use of "masses," see Wou, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 18–19.

Chapter 2

1. The Chinese belief in ghosts as the cause of illnesses can be traced to at least the Eastern Zhou period (770–256 BCE). Subsequently, "demonic medicine" has been a "permanent part of medical care in China" and persists into the present among ritual healers. It includes a variety of methods to exorcise demons, including noise making, burning, fumigations, incantations, talismans, ritual archery, acupuncture, and herbal drugs. Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 37–45, 215–22, 251.
2. Mu, "Benshi Baijiaping," *JFRB*, 4/29/1944. The currency was likely the bianbi 邊幣 that had been issued by the SGN Border Region government since 1941 to replace the devaluating fabi 法幣 issued by the GMD government. By the mid-1940s, the exchange rate of fabi to bianbi was 1 to 8.5 in the Border Region, and the Border Region bank stipulated the exchange rate of 1 US dollar for 1,350 yuan bianbi. To put the bianbi in concrete terms, a family in Yan'an had to pay over a minimum of 1 million fabi (9 million bianbi) to purchase a bride in the mid-1940s. On the Yan'an market in 1944, several clay dolls cost over 10,000 yuan in bianbi. See Jin, *Yan'an jianwenlu*, 112; Stein, *Challenge of Red China*, 197–99; Zhao, *Yan'an yiyue*, 73; Huang, *SGN bianqu shehui jingji shi*, 514–38; and Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 54n106.
3. Mu, "Benshi baijiaping"; Lu, "Kaizhan fandui wushen de douzheng," *JFRB*, 4/29/1944.
4. *FDWS*, or *Zhankai fandui wushen de douzheng*—the order of the first two characters is reversed from the editorial's title. An English translation of the booklet is in Kagan, "Chinese Approach to Shamanism." I thank T. J. Hinrichs who shared Kagan's work with me.
5. Stranahan, *Molding the Medium*, 3–18, 32–34; Qian, "Bo Gu he Lu Dingyi." Lu went on to become the PRC's first minister of the Party Central's Propaganda Department, a vice prime minister, and minister of culture before he was purged during the Cultural Revolution.
6. Wang, "Lu Dingyi zai Yan'an," 59, 62.
7. Mao, "General Policy for the United Front." Party leader Zhang Wentian 張聞天 (1900–1976) reported an illiteracy rate of 93 percent in Shenfu 神府 County. Zhang, *Zhang Wentian JinShaan diaocha wenji*, 72. Wartime mobilization led to a further decline of literate men in the villages. Esherick, "Deconstructing the Party-State," 1061.
8. These statistics were from Ansai 安塞 County and reflect the Border Region's general situation. Liang, Yang, and Yao, *SGN bianqu shigang*, 176. The CCP statistics in 1939 shows that, of cadres at all levels of local government, 41.26 percent were illiterate, 45.6 percent could read newspapers, and the percentages of those having elementary, middle-school, high-school, and university level education were 10.42, 2.07, 0.42, and 0.23, respectively. "SGN bianqu dangwei zuzhibu," 326.
9. Lin, "Bianqu minzhu zhengzhi de xin jieduan," in *WJXB*, vol. 9, 78. Lin was an elder member of the CCP and chairman of the SGN Border Region. He delivered this speech on December 5, 1944, at the Border Region's Second Congressional Meeting.
10. For more on *Liberation Daily*'s established layout and format, see Stranahan, *Molding the Medium*, 6–7, 32–43.
11. Mao, "Resolution of the Central Committee," June 1, 1943, 364.

12. Examples can be found in Yuan, "Zichang *Dazhongbao*," *JFRB*, 5/28/1944; and Zhang, "Bage wushen zhuanbian le," *JFRB*, 6/30/1944. See also Keating, *Two Revolutions*, 233–34. However, such initiatives, run by ordinary peasants and low-level cadres, were often very poor. See Zhang, *Zhang Wentian JinShaan diaocha wenji*, 92; and Esherick, "Deconstructing the Party-State," 1065–66.
13. Zhang and Wang, *Mu Qing zishu*, 71–74. Hailing from a Hui family from Anhui, Mu arrived in Yan'an in 1937. In 1942 he graduated from Luyi and joined the *Liberation Daily*. After 1949 he served various leading positions in the Beijing office and several local branches of the New China News Agency. He became the Agency's editor in chief in 1977 and its president and Party secretary from 1982 to 1992. See also Peng, *Jizhe Mu Qing*.
14. Qian, "Bo Gu he Lu Dingyi," 131.
15. Mu, "Dangbao shang de diyipian shehui xinwen," 22–23.
16. On late imperial and modern critics, see Schneewind, "Competing Institutions"; and Nedostup, *Superstitious Regime*.
17. Lu, "Kaizhan fandui wushen de douzheng."
18. "Wushen Bai Conghai de tanbai"; Mu, "Wushen de pianshu," *JFRB* 6/18/1944.
19. Both pieces were republished along with several others in one chapter entitled "The Many Evil Crimes of Shamans" in the anti-shaman booklet, *FDWS*.
20. Foucault, *The Order of Things*; Rabinow, "Introduction," 3–29.
21. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 58–59.
22. In the local culture, shamans could be called *mengxian* because they see ghosts in dreams or trances. *Yanchang xianzhi*, 576; *Yanchuan xianzhi*, 682; *Yan'an diquzhi*, 1029.
23. Chau and Liu, "Spirit Mediumism in Shaanbei." See also Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 54–57.
24. Chau and Liu, "Spirit Mediumism in Shaanbei," 96–103.
25. Mu, "Wushen de pianshu."
26. The belief that an individual spirit oversees each day of one's life had already appeared in the texts of the Way of the Celestial Masters (Tianshidao 天師道) Daoist movement since at least the fourth century CE. Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 80–85. The hexagram diagnoses fall into the same conceptual framework of the long tradition of "demonic medicine." Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 29–50.
27. "Wushen Bai Conghai de tanbai," *JFRB*, 6/16/1944.
28. See, e.g., a Qing official's criticism of ritual healing by members of a local sect in the 1820s, in Nayancheng, *Na Wenyigong zouyi*, j 70, 16a–b, also cited in Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 56.
29. On Late imperial elite suppression of shamans, see Sutton, "From Credulity to Scorn."
30. Anagnost, "Politics and Magic," 51–52.
31. "Wushen Bai Conghai de tanbai."
32. "Wushen Bai Conghai de tanbai."
33. The payment was likely in cash and kind combined, and the latter included cloth, grain, chickens, lambs, pigs, or other items used in the healing ritual. Cash payments ranged from 800 to 2,000 yuan on different occasions; see "Wushen Bai Conghai de

tanbai." In another report, a shaman who performed a healing ritual allegedly received a payment of 5,000 yuan. See Zhao, "Dingbian Tian wushen hairen piancai," *JFRB*, 7/14/1944. It would cost anywhere from 90,000 to 300,000 yuan, if the exorcistic ritual was performed for the community rather than for individual families; see "Yanxian wushen zui'e xiao tongji," *FDWS*, 51–52.

34. Gibbs, *Song King*, 55–57.
35. Yü, " 'O Soul, Come Back;' " Cohen, "Souls and Salvation."
36. Mu, "Wushen de pianshu."
37. Mu, "Wushen de pianshu." This is an abridged summary of the original passage, and I add several explanatory phrases to make the passage more comprehensible in English.
38. "Wushen Bai Conghai de tanbai."
39. "Wushen Bai Conghai de tanbai." Such scenes are also described as *honghuo* 紅火 (red and fiery) in local terms. On *renao* or *honghuo* as a crucial aspect of Chinese ritual and religious life, see Weller, *Resistance, Chaos and Control*, 113–28; and Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 147–68.
40. "Wushen Bai Conghai de tanbai."
41. "Wushen Bai Conghai de tanbai."
42. "Wushen Bai Conghai de tanbai."
43. Zhao, *Yan'an yiyue*, 183.
44. "Wushen Bai Conghai de tanbai." The death of one of the shamans was also reported in "Wushen guoyin de gushi," *JFRB*, 4/30/1944.
45. Bai's view is at odds with a confessional statement made by another shaman a month later, seemingly following Party rhetoric to scoff at the power of gods: "Who said that gods were there for the 'descent to the underworld'?! . . . I spread the blanket and quilt in the pit. . . After a nice and comfortable sleep, I came out and money made!" "Yanxian zhaokai fan wushen dahui," *JFRB*, 7/21/1944.
46. On the importance of sincerity and moral commitment in shamans' ritual performance, see Sutton, "From Credulity to Scorn," 33; and DeBarnardi, *The Way*, 83.
47. Mu, "Wushen de pianshu."
48. Mu, "Benshi Baijiaping."
49. Mu, "Dangbao shang de diyipian shehui xinwen," 22–23.
50. Mu, "Benshi Baijiaping" and "Wushen de pianshu."
51. Furth, *A Flourishing Yin*, 266–83; Wu, *Reproducing Women*, 18–19; Hershatter, *Gender of Memory*, 154–81.
52. Jun, "Sanbian chule ge 'huo shenxian.' "
53. *Yanchang xianzhi*, 571; *Yanchuan xianzhi*, 679; *Yan'an diquzhi*, 1024.
54. Qin and Yue, *Zouchu fengbi*, 37–41; Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 73–84, 92–101, 133–39.
55. Zhang, *Shaanbei jinji minsu wenhua*, 86, 123–25; Qin and Yue, *Zouchu fengbi*, 103–104.
56. Bai, "Women zenyang he wushen zuo douzheng," *JFRB*, 5/18/1944; Zhang, "Bage wushen zhuanbian le."
57. Mu, "Dangbao shang de diyipian shehui xinwen," 22–23.

58. This was the defense that was relayed by Lei Jingtian, chief justice of the Border Region high court, to Gunther Stein, who visited Yan'an in the summer of 1944. Stein, *Challenge of Red China*, 285. Since the Yan'an period archives have been indefinitely closed to the public, it is unclear whether the court records of Yang's trial have survived. Even if they have, we may never know whether Yang told the truth or was coerced into admitting to the campaign's accusations.
59. Ter Haar, "Rethinking 'Violence,' " 130–32.
60. Goossaert, "Irrepressible Female Piety," 221.
61. DeBarnardi, *The Way*; Sutton, *Steps of Perfections*; Katz, *Divine Justice*, 107–15.
62. Davis, *Society and the Supernatural*, 96–107. On judicial torture in the imperial legal system, see Park, "Imperial Chinese Justice." On the intricate link between Daoist exorcistic rites and Chinese legal culture, see Katz, "Trial by Power" and *Divine Justice*, 99–100.
63. Stein, *Challenge of Red China*, 284.
64. Edwards, "Drawing Sexual Violence," 563.
65. Edwards, "Drawing Sexual Violence"; Taylor, "Gendered Archetypes," 680.
66. Wang, *Monster That Is History*, 49–50, 62. Contrary to the common accusation in contemporary Western accounts, such descriptions do not reflect the actual imperial laws that demanded the prudent use of official torture. Park, "Imperial Chinese Justice."
67. Furth, *A Flourishing Yin*; Wu, *Reproducing Women*, 18–22, 120–22, 178–87.
68. Johnson, *Childbirth in Republican China*, 93–102; Hershatter, *Gender of Memory*, 154–81.
69. See, e.g., Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society*; Theiss, *Disgraceful Matters*; and Lu, *True to Her Words*.
70. Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 131–69; Szonyi, "The Virgin and the Chinese State." See Barlow, *Question of Women*, 222–28, and Edwards, *Women Warriors*, 158–74, on a 1941 story about a woman sex spy, written in Yan'an by the feminist novelist Ding Ling. The story stimulated a seventy-year-long debate in China over whether the sex spy should be honored for her patriotic sacrifice or despised for her tainted sexuality.
71. Qin and Yue, *Zouchu fengbi*, 127–32.
72. On shamans' role of protecting children, see Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 56–57.
73. Mu, "Wushen de pianshu."
74. Von Glahn, "Enchantment of Wealth"; Kang, *Cult of the Fox*, 109–11.
75. Only in one news report was a shaman accused of using the pretense of panhandling healing services to flirt with women, but the report goes no further than calling him a swindler and loafer. Zhang and Yang, "Yanxian Hezhuangqu wushen," *JFRB*, 5/28/1944.
76. Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society*, 66–113, esp. 77–79.
77. Chau and Liu, "Spirit Mediumism in Shaanbei"; Wu, *Reinventing Chinese Tradition*, 122–46; my own fieldwork in Yan'an, May 2014 and 2018.
78. Wu, *Reinventing Chinese Tradition*, 134–40; DeBernardi, *The Way*, 175–200; Cline, "Female Spirit Mediums"; Yang, "Shamanism and Spirit Possession." My own

fieldwork in Shaanbei in May 2014 corroborates this. According to Donald Sutton, self-mortification in Taiwan's exorcistic rituals is reserved for men only. Personal communication, December 6, 2016. Davis, however, finds that a Tang (618–907) dynasty female medium performed a ritual of torture similar to the "summoning for investigation" ritual discussed in this chapter. Davis, *Society and the Supernatural*, 104–106.

79. Mu, "Wushen de pianshu."
80. Studies on female shamans' initiation based on their own willpower (or by their own spirits) are too many to list here. Examples include Kang, *Cult of the Fox*, 97–126; DeBarnardi, *The Way*, 175–200; Cline, "Female Spirit Mediums"; and Yang, "Shamanism and Spirit Possession."
81. Stein, *Challenge of Red China*, 130.
82. Edwards, "Drawing Sexual Violence."

Chapter 3

1. Brook, Bourgon, and Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, 105–15; Wang, *Monster That Is History*, 70–73. Arguably the most popular traditional "show trials" come from stories and plays about Judge Bao, some of which can be found in Idema, *Judge Bao*. It should be noted, however, that Chinese public spectacles of corporal punishment tended to be less elaborate than those of their premodern European counterparts. Mühlhahn, *Criminal Justice in China*, 40–41.
2. Chase, "Stalin as Producer"; Fiskesjö, "Return of the Show Trial," 13.
3. Mühlhahn, *Criminal Justice in China*, 160–62.
4. This kind of public trial was different from the "open court" trials discussed in the second section of this chapter. On public trials, and especially the one involving the twenty-six-year-old officer Huang Kekong 黃克功, who killed a female college student in 1937, see Gao and Ai, *SGN bianqu shenpan shi*, 80–81, 92–97.
5. Fiskesjö, "Return of the Show Trial," 13.
6. Gao and Ai, *SGN bianqu shenpan shi*, 80–81.
7. McKnight, *Law and Order*, 324–28; Mühlhahn, *Criminal Justice in China*, 26–27.
8. Mu, "Benshi Baijiaping."
9. "Xingfa zong, fenze cao'an," in *FLFG*, 103–26, see 121–22.
10. Chief Justice Lei Jingtian told Gunther Stein that applying the GMD legal code, the court sentenced Yang to the highest term of imprisonment. However, his statement does not comply with the legal code cited above. According to PRC legal scholars Gao Haishen and Ai Shaorun, the Border Region government adjusted the GMD legal code of criminals serving terms from twenty years to five years after 1938, but then changed it to ten years in 1942. See Stein, *Challenge of Red China*, 285; Gao and Ai, *SGN bianqu shenpan shi*, 51.
11. "SGN bianqu gaodeng fayuan zhishixin," in *FLFG*, 128–30, see 129.

12. "Yan'an shi difang fayuan shenpan Wang Zhanlin" (dated 1942) and "Shaanbei renmin fayuan shenli Liu Jubao" (dated 1949), Gao and Ai, *SGN bianqu shenpan shi*, at pages 100 and 97–99, respectively.
13. "SGN bianqu gaodeng fayuan zhishixin," 129.
14. Stein, *Challenge of Red China*, 284.
15. Stein, *Challenge of Red China*, 287.
16. Whyte, *Small Groups*, 10–17, 25–33; Chen, *Yan'an de yinying*; Gao, *Hong taiyang*; Apter and Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse*, 263–93; Cheng, *Creating the "New Man,"* 65–69.
17. Chen, *Making Revolution*, 337–38.
18. One such confession meeting was held in Fuxian 鄜縣, about eighty kilometers south of Yan'an City; see "Qunzhong juxing fan wushen dahui," *JFRB*, 6/3/1944. Another was held in a township in Yanchuan County; see "Yanchuan Yongyuan qu," *JFRB*, 6/28/1944.
19. "Guanyu kaizhan qunzhong weisheng yiyao gongzuo de jueyi," an official resolution passed at the BRCE Convention on November 16, 1944. *JFRB*, 1/8/1945.
20. "Yanxian zhaokai fan wushen dahui," *JFRB*, 7/21/1944.
21. "Yanxian zhaokai fan wushen dahui."
22. "Yanxian zhaokai fan wushen dahui."
23. "Fan wushen gongyue," *JFRB*, 7/21/1944.
24. Whyte, *Small Groups*, 23–33.
25. Übelhör, "Community Compact," 371–88 (emphasis mine); Schneewind, *Community Schools*, 154–55.
26. Liu, *Confucian Rituals*, 167–79; McDermott, "Emperor, Elite, and Commoners," 300; Katz, *Divine Justice*, 53.
27. "SGN bianqu zhengfu gongzuo baogao," April 1941, in *WJXB*, vol. 3, 204; Qin and Hu, *Qingdai yilai*, 135–38.
28. Keating, *Two Revolutions*, 112–13.
29. Modern Chinese concepts of punishment and rehabilitation were influenced by both Western penal theories and the Confucian ideal of moral transformation. See Mühlhahn, *Criminal Justice in China*, 75–76; and Kiely, *Compelling Ideal*, 19–41, 44–77. Confucian elements, such as "the belief in human malleability, the practice of model emulation, and belief in the effects of study of texts," shaped CCP's thought reform. Cheng, *Creating the "New Man,"* 50.
30. Wu, "Self-Examination"; Eberhard, *Guilt and Sin*; Katz, *Divine Justice*, 105–15; Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*, 352–53, 381–84; Li and Liao, *Chenlun, chanhui yu jiudu*.
31. Mühlhahn, *Criminal Justice in China*, 49; Conner, "True Confessions?"
32. Katz, *Divine Justice*, 61–81.
33. Ai, "SGN bianqu xingfa de tedian," in *FLFG*, 98–100. On Soviet influence, see Mühlhahn, *Criminal Justice in China*, 148–53.
34. "Xingfa zong, fenze cao'an."
35. On payments in kind to shamans, see Chapter 2, note 33. On the traditional use of contracts, see Hansen, *Negotiating Daily Life*. On the contrasts between imperial law and customary law in village life, see Hase, *Custom, Land and Livelihood*.

36. Kiely, *Compelling Ideal*, 33–40, 64–67; 255–96; Smith, *Thought Reform*, esp. 19–27. On *jiaohua* in late imperial times, see Schneewind, *Community Schools*.
37. Cheng, *Creating the "New Man,"* 59–70; Smith, *Thought Reform*, 25–27.
38. Yin was named a labor hero and received other honors, serving as district chief at least from 1943 to 1945. See "Bianqu laodong yingxiong," *JFRB*, 12/6/1943; and "SGN bianqu zhengfu mingling," July 17, 1944, in *WJXB*, vol. 8, 303.
39. Wang, "Yin quzhang jiaoyu youfang," *JFRB*, 5/28/1944.
40. Wang, "Yin quzhang jiaoyu youfang."
41. Wang, "Yin quzhang jiaoyu youfang."
42. On the open court practices, known as "Ma Xiwu's way of judging," see Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 178–206, esp. 194–95.
43. On the combined judicial and administrative roles of imperial officials, see Conner, "True Confessions?," 134–35.
44. The other three stories feature: (1) a shaman "gives up evil and returns to good," in Zhang and Yang, "Yanxian Hezhuangqu wushen"; (2) a local newspaper follows the *Liberation Daily* to expose shaman swindlers, in Yuan, "Zichang *Dazhongbao*"; and (3) an angry young peasant hacked a shaman quack and forced him to surrender to the local authority, in Zhu and Li, "Bingren Gao Shuan." *JFRB*, 5/28/1944. The same page also features eleven stories on the public health campaign, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.
45. Boltz, "Not by the Seal of Office Alone," 243; Kang, *Cult of the Fox*, 161–90.
46. Qin and Yue, *Zouchu fengbi*, 93, 98, 106–107, 164; Guo, *Shoukuren de jiangshu*.
47. On the harsh ecological conditions in Shaanbei, see *Two Revolutions*, 14–34.
48. "Yanxian zhaokai fan wushen dahui." On the Yan'an reform of "loafers" as a precedent of PRC's thought reform, see Smith, *Thought Reform*, 33–42.
49. "Bianqu erliuzi de gaizao," *JFRB*, 5/1/1944.
50. Cai, *Geming/Xushu*, 224–25.
51. Mühlhahn, *Criminal Justice in China*, 146–58; Cheng, *Creating the "New Man,"* 55–70; Smith, *Thought Reform*. The GMD also used labor in its penal and educational systems. See Kiely, *The Compelling Ideal*, 182–83; and Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes*, 206–15.
52. Ai, "Jianli xin de laodong guannian," *JFRB*, 4/8/1943. See also Spakowski, "Yan'an's Labor Heroines," 123–27.
53. See, e.g., this phrase used in "Bianqu erliuzi de gaizao."
54. "SGN bianqu diyijie laodong yingxiong daibiao dahui xuanyan," *JFRB*, 12/17/1943.
55. Among many reports: "Wu Manyou—mofan gongmin," *JFRB*, 5/6/1942; "Kaizhan Wu Manyou yundong," *JFRB*, 1/11/1943; "Guanyu Wu Manyou de fangxiang," *JFRB*, 3/15/1943; "Wu Manyou chuangzao mofan xiang," *Bianqu qunzhong bao*, 12/19/1943. See also Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, 263–65; and Zhu, *Tianshang xingxing*, 283–323.
56. "Kaizhan Wu Manyou yundong" (emphasis mine).
57. "Zhonggong Zhongyang," *JFRB*, 2/26/1943. On the Party's new initiative to mobilize women in 1943, see Spakowski, "Yan'an's Labor Heroines," 127–31.

58. "Ma Pi'en Ma Xing'er," *JFRB*, 1/31/1943; Mo, "Xin Zhongguo," *JFRB*, 2/13/1943; "Guo Fengying qinlao shi'er nian," *JFRB*, 4/22/1943.
59. Stranahan, "Labor Heroines"; Huang, *SGN Bianqu xiangcun*, 300–302. Official exhortations of women on spinning, weaving, childcare, and livestock rearing are well reflected in key Party documents on "women's work" during this period, collected in Sun and Gao, *Yan'an xiangcun jianshe ziliao*, vol. 1, 327–421.
60. "Fayang genjudi xinshi jiating," *JFRB*, 8/25/1944; Spakowski, "Yan'an's Labor Heroines."
61. Huan Nan, "Nongcun li de 'haozi,'" *JFRB*, 5/16/1942. Huan Nan was the pen name of Xie Juezai 謝覺哉 (1884–1971), then general secretary in the Border Region government. See also Lin, "Ba erliuzi biancheng hao laodong," *JFRB*, 1/16/1944.
62. "Yanxian wushen zui'e xiao tongji," *FDWS*, 49–51. The currency was likely in bianbi; see Chapter 2, note 2. On the shaman Cheng Xiang, see Chapter 5. It is unclear how one *shang* was measured here, since in northwest China, one *shang* equates to either 3 *mu* 畝 (one sixth of an acre) or 5 *mu*. The article originally appears in *JFRB*, 8/11/1944, without the last paragraph cited here.
63. On the reform of loafers, see Smith, *Thought Reform*, 33–42. Although the CCP claimed to have reformed loafers since 1937, the campaign did not start until February 14, 1943, marked by a front-page editorial in the *Liberation Daily* under the title of "Gaizao erliuzi."
64. Liu, "Gaizao erliuzi zai Shenfu," *Kangzhan ribao*, 9/30/1944.
65. Lin, "Ba erliuzi biancheng hao laodong."
66. Translation by James Legge (1815–1897), online at https://ctext.org/xiao-jing. Cited in Steinmüller, "Father Mao and the Country-Family," 4.
67. Steinmüller, "Father Mao and the Country-Family," 3–8.
68. Mao, "Death in the Interests of the People"; Karl, "To Serve the People."
69. Apter and Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse*, 35–38. On examples of Mao as a man of the people, see Shi and Chen, *Mao Zedong de gushi*, 279–84; Li and Zheng, *Mao Zedong jishi*, 397–98; and Mo Ai, "Mao Zhuxi shicha Nanqu hezuoshe jishi."
70. Steinmüller, "Father Mao and the Country-Family," 7–8.
71. Wei, "Jingqu erliuzi de gaizao," *JFRB*, 7/12/1943.
72. "Bianqu erliuzi de gaizao."
73. Wei, "Jingqu erliuzi de gaizao."
74. Wei, "Jingqu erliuzi de gaizao"; "Bianqu erliuzi de gaizao."
75. One can get a good flavor of this universal practice from the Wikipedia page on public humiliation: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_humiliation. See also Cassen, *Marking the Jews in Renaissance Italy*.
76. McKnight, *Law and Order*, 327.
77. McKnight, *Law and Order*, 326–27; Mühlhahn, *Criminal Justice in China*, 26–27.
78. Haidt, "Moral Emotions," 859–63; Cova, Deonna, and Sander, "Introduction," 397–400.
79. The phrase "good laborer" appeared in many titles of *Liberation Daily* articles on loafer reform. See, e.g., Fu, "Erliuzi biancheng hao laodong," *JFRB*, 12/23/1943; Lin, "Ba erliuzi biancheng hao laodong"; and Wang, "Yin quzhang jiaoyu youfang."

80. Liu, "Maoist Discourse," 333. See also Perry, "Moving the Masses," 111–28.
81. "Zichang wushen Nie Zhixiu," *JFRB*, 5/6/1944; "Ansai siqu gaizao wushen," *JFRB*, 6/14/1944; "Gao Qingshan buzai zuo wushen," *JFRB*, 6/17/1944; Zhang, "Bage wushen zhuanbian le."
82. "Guo Suiyun gaixie guizheng," in *FDWS*, 76–78.
83. On the high price of brides in Shaanbei, see *Cong, Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 52–64.
84. "Guo Suiyun gaixie guizheng," in *FDWS*, 79.
85. Sutton, "From Credulity to Scorn," 33.

Chapter 4

1. Zhang, "Yiwujie de chuangzuo," *JFRB*, 7/23/1944; Xu, "Weisheng zhanlanhui," *JFRB*, 8/13/1944.
2. "Yanxian gequ yibing liuxing," *JFRB*, 5/12/1944.
3. Fu, "Qunzhong weisheng gongzuo," *JFRB*, 4/30/1944. Western missionaries had set up several clinics in the region since the early twentieth century, but their capacities and impact were limited. Lü, "Jidujiao yu jindai Shaanbei shehui," 96.
4. Fu, "Qunzhong weisheng gongzuo."
5. On cases in other Asian societies, see Connor and Samuel, *Healing Powers and Modernity*.
6. On GMD efforts, see Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes*, 109–11, 215–24; Lei, *Neither Donkey nor Horse*, 140–92. On CCP efforts, see Taylor, *Chinese Medicine*, 14–29.
7. Chen and Bunge, *Medicine in Rural China*, 72–99; Hayford, *To the People*, 132–41. See also Merkel-Hess, *Rural Modern*, 101–107; and Zhang, *Going to the Countryside*, 44–78.
8. Doctors in Ding County dismissed folk healers as illiterate peasants and did not treat them as a threat to modern medicine. Chen and Bunge, *Medicine in Rural China*, 75; Merkel-Hess, *Rural Modern*, 92–100.
9. Lu, "Kaizhan fandui wushen de douzheng"; Fu, "Qunzhong weisheng gongzuo." The same issues were emphasized in a major editorial, "Kaizhan quan bianqu weisheng yundong," *JFRB*, 7/10/1944.
10. Mao, "General Policy for the United Front"; Li, "Guanyu wenjiao gongzuo de fangxiang."
11. Lu, "Kaizhan fandui wushen de douzheng."
12. Xu, "Weisheng zhanlanhui"; Wang, Liu and Yun, "Sanbian fenqu ZhongXi yiyao yanjiu hui," *JFRB*, 10/18/1944; "Caiji yaocai yu Zhongyao Xizhi wenti," *Kangzhan ribao*, 5/2/1945; Pei, "ZhongXi yi hezuo de jige wenti," *JFRB*, 9/30/1944; Taylor, *Chinese Medicine*, 17.
13. Lei, *Neither Donkey nor Horse*, esp. 140–66, 274–76.
14. "Wenjiaohui shang ZhongXi shouyi zuotan"; Croizier, *Traditional Medicine*, 151–209.
15. "Guanzhong shanren Ren Heping," "Yanshi ruyi Bi Guangdou," "Cui Yuerui yu Buzhangcun," in *YWMF*, 23–26, 33–36, 37–48; Taylor, *Chinese Medicine*, 17.

16. Taylor, *Chinese Medicine*, 19–29. "Yanxian ZhongXiyi jiyi chengli yanjiuhui," *JFRB*, 8/11/1944; "Dingbian chengli yiyao yanjiuhui," *JFRB*, 6/12/1944; "Guanyu kaizhan qunzhong weisheng yiyao gongzuo de jueyi."
17. Zhang, "Bage wushen zhuanbian le;" "Guo Suiyun gaixie guizheng," in *FDWS*, 81; "Liu Jianzhang shouchuang yiyao hezuoshe," *JFRB*, 6/16/1944.
18. Furth, *A Flourishing Yin*; Wu, *Reproducing Women*, 18–22. See also Sutton, "From Credulity to Scorn"; Hinrichs, "Shamans, Witchcrafts and Quarantine."
19. Nye, "Medicine and Science"; Kang, "Women and the Religious Question," 494–502.
20. Liu, " 'Wang buzhang ba wo jiuhuo le!' " *JFRB*, 6/4/1944."
21. "Zhenshi huo shenxian li," *JFRB*, 9/29/1944.
22. The record of this event is preserved in an army corps' archive and reprinted in Jun, "Sanbian chule ge 'huo shenxian.' " The author may not have made a distinction between female shamans and midwives (*lao niangpo* 老娘婆) in Shaanbei.
23. Jia et al., "Jizhong meishu xuanchuan fangshi de shiyan," *JFRB*, 8/28/1944. The raree show was a common form of folk entertainment in early twentieth-century China: an entertainer narrated a story through pictures installed inside a large box, and the audience watched the pictures through small holes on the sides of the box.
24. Ruan became the vice president of Beijing Hospital in the 1980s. See "Nü yisheng Ruan Xuehua yu Bai Lang," in *YWMF*, 1–13; Cao, *Weishengbu lishi kaozheng*, 231–32.
25. "Nü yisheng Ruan Xuehua yu Bai Lang." The available sources are unclear whether this Bai Lang was actually Liu Suzhen 劉素貞, who changed her name to Bai Lang upon arriving in Yan'an in early 1940 and received medical training around 1941. The Bai Lang in *YWMF* came from a poor family and arrived in Yan'an in 1938, while Liu came from a renowned gentry family in Fangcheng 防城 County of Guangxi 廣西. Liu later changed her name again to Li Yunbing 李雲冰. See Wei, "Cong Liushi jiazu zouchu de geming nüxing."
26. "Nü yisheng Ruan Xuehua yu Bai Lang"; "Yanshi weisheng hezuoshe kaimu," *JFRB*, 5/28/1944.
27. "Nü yisheng Ruan Xuehua yu Bai Lang," 2–3, 5–9; "Yanshi weisheng hezuoshe kaimu."
28. Furth, *A Flourishing Yin*, esp. 59–93, 164–74; Valussi, "Blood, Tigers, Dragons"; Wu, *Reproducing Women*, 28–29, 86–90. On the Chinese reluctance today to donate blood for fear of health consequences, see "Blood: The Mother of Qi."
29. "Nü yisheng Ruan Xuehua yu Bai Lang," 3–4; "Yanshi weisheng hezuoshe kaimu." What Bai practiced here—using the blood of a patient recovered from an infectious disease to treat other patients—is called convalescent plasma therapy in Western medicine. It has recently been discussed in connection with treatments for the COVID-19 virus. LaFee, "Q & A."
30. Doctors of foreign origin in Yan'an and other base areas included Shafick George Hatem (Ma Haide 馬海德, 1910–1988), American; Dwarkanath Shantaram Kotnis (Ke Dihua 柯棣華, 1910–1942), Indian; Hans Mueller (漢斯米勒, 1939–1994), German; and Bang Wooyong 方禹鏞 방우용 (1893–?), Korean. See Watt, *Saving Lives*, 254.

31. Mao, "In Memory of Norman Bethune." To this day, Bethune is still a household name in China, with a prestigious medical university named after him. Lynteris, "In Memory of Norman Bethune."
32. "Guoji youren Aluofu," *YWMF*, 14–20.
33. Mao, "General Policy for the United Front." See also Croizier, *Traditional Medicine*, 151–57; and Taylor, *Chinese Medicine*, 16.
34. At the BRCE Convention, Ren Heping, Wang Zhaoxin (Director Wang, mentioned earlier in the chapter), and Cui Yuerui were honored as "special-class models," and Bi won personal recognition along with eminent Party educators and foreign doctors. "Wenjiao dahui shengli bimu," *JFRB*, 11/20/1944.
35. Liu, "Yingxiongbian songdao Buzhangcun," *JFRB*, 8/21/1944; "Sanbian kaizhan pochu mixin yundong," *JFRB*, 8/21/1944. Cui's name appears as Yueshun 岳舜 in the *Liberation Daily*'s early reports on 4/2/1944 and 8/21/1944; "rui" and "shun" are phonetically similar in local dialect.
36. "Dingbian xian canyiyuan," *JFRB*, 4/2/1944; Zhang, "Cui Yuerui he Cui Yuerui yundong," *JFRB*, 10/21/1944.
37. "Dingbian xian canyiyuan."
38. "Dingbian xian canyiyuan."
39. Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, 6, 59–88.
40. Ho, *Curating Revolution*. See also Denton, *Exhibiting the Past*, 11–23.
41. Ho, *Curating Revolution*, 160–206.
42. On CCP newspaper records of these exhibitions in Yan'an from 1939 to 1944, see *Jiefang qu zhanlanhui ziliao*, 25, 56, 69, 140–49.
43. "Weisheng zhanlanhui jieshu," *JFRB*, 8/11/1944; "Weizhan yi Yanda jixu zhanlan," *JFRB*, 8/5/1944. In another article, the newspaper reports about 4,000 visitors in the first round but does not specify how many were local villagers. "Yanshi weisheng zhanlanhui bimu," *JFRB*, 7/27/1944.
44. Zhang, "Yiwujie de chuangzuo."
45. "Yan'an weisheng zhanlanhui kaimu," *JFRB*, 7/18/1944.
46. Zhang, "Yiwujie de chuangzuo."
47. Zhang, "Jieshu yumei mixin de shenghuo," *JFRB*, 8/11/1944.
48. Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, 67, 78.
49. "Weisheng zhanlanhui jieshu."
50. Zhang, "Yiwujie de chuangzuo."
51. Zhang, "Yiwujie de chuangzuo." The first case appears in Zhu and Li, "Bingren Gao Shuan." The origin of the second drawing is unclear, although the intended message is a standard trope in anti-shaman stories.
52. "Yanxian Zhongyi canguan weizhan," *JFRB*, 7/19/1944; Zhang, "Yiwujie de chuangzuo."
53. Zhang, "Jieshu yumei mixin de shenghuo." Guo's name appears as Guo Suiye 郭綏業 here.
54. Zhang, "Jieshu yumei mixin de shenghuo."

55. On CCP's midwifery reform during the Yan'an and early PRC periods, see Johnson and Wu, "Maternal and Child Health," 59–60; and Ahn, "Modernization, Revolution and Midwifery Reforms," 211–90.
56. Zhang, "Jieshu yumei mixin de shenghuo."
57. Zhang, "Jieshu yumei mixin de shenghuo."
58. Such as the New China News Agency and the New China Radio Station. The grottos also feature "Ten Thousand Buddhist Statues" from the Sui to the Qing.
59. *Yan'an shizhi*, 700. The chief goddess is "The Holy Mother of the Ninth Heaven" (*Jiutian shengnü niangniang* 九天聖女娘娘), flanked by eight holy mothers under titles such as "delivering children," "cutting the umbilical cord," and "inducing lactation."
60. Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 51–58, 159–64.
61. "Yanshi Dongguan quzhang Wang Desheng," *JFRB*, 5/5/1944.
62. "Wenjiao dahui taolun gaizao miaohui jiaoyu qunzhong," *JFRB*, 11/9/1944.
63. "Niangniang miaohui shang xuanchuan," *Bianqu qunzhong bao*, 5/13/1945.
64. Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 99–146, 169–95. See also Liu and Liu, "Zhengfu, difang jingying" on the imperial elite leadership of the temple fair at the Clear and Cool Mountain.
65. Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 159–64. See also Weller, *Resistance, Chaos, and Control*, 113–28.
66. The academy operated in Yan'an from April 1938 to November 1945. It had four departments (literature, theater, music, and fine arts) and hosted key CCP literary and artistic talents. To this day, Luyi has represented CCP's Yan'an legacy in arts and literature. *Yan'an daxue shi*, 97–107.
67. "Zuori Qingliangshan miaohui shang," *JFRB*, 5/20/1944; "Benshi choubei," *JFRB*, 5/17/1945.
68. "Zuori Qingliangshan miaohui," *JFRB*, 5/9/1946.
69. "Taihang Licheng juxing miaohui," *JFRB*, 4/18/1945.
70. "Jingbian ganbuhui jueding," *JFRB*, 4/18/1945; "Bian Fulian deng jiguan," *JFRB*, 5/5/1945; "Zichang Yangjia yuanzi," *JFRB*, 5/20/1945.
71. "Qingyang Taohuashan miaohui," *JFRB*, 5/5/1945; "Zuori Qingliangshan miaohui shang."
72. Liu and Zheng, "Ruhe liyong miaohui," *JFRB*, 9/6/1946; Zheng, "Mizhi liyong miaohui," *JFRB*, 9/6/1946; Wang, "Jielu JiangMei langbei weijian," *JFRB*, 9/6/1946.
73. "Zhidan liyong Liujiaping miaohui xuanchuan shouxiao," *JFRB*, 7/19/1945.
74. "Zhidan liyong Liujiaping miaohui xuanchuan shouxiao."
75. Because of concerns with fertility and maternal health, women were a prominent presence at the fairs honoring the Holy Mothers. Qin and Yue, *Zouchu fengbi*, 167–9. Official bans against women's participation in temple fairs were often futile in late imperial times. See Lagerwey, "Pilgrimage to Wu-tang Shan"; and Goossaert, "Irrepressible Female Piety."
76. On CCP reforms to the *yangge* art form, see Holm, *Art and Ideology*. See also chapter 5 in this volume.

77. Harrison Forman (1904–1978) recorded such a performance and noted the audience's enthusiasm in *Report from Red China*, 90–93. See also Ding Ling's account below.
78. Wang, "Yangge ju zai miaohui shang," *JFRB*, 7/11/1945.
79. Li, "Lingbaoshan miaohui," *JFRB*, 5/27/1945.
80. "Mizhi Niangniang miaohui shang," *JFRB*, 5/15/1945.
81. Ding, "Ji Zhuanyaowan luoma dahui."
82. Ho, *Curating Revolution*.
83. On key differences between temple fairs and CCP political rituals, see Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 166–67.

Chapter 5

1. Feng, "Nao 'gui,' " *JFRB*, 8/12/1944.
2. Judd, "Revolutionary Drama and Song"; Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 20–30.
3. *Mao's Talks*, 105–6. See also Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 91–108.
4. Feng was a native of southern Shaanxi and started as a part-time correspondent for the *Liberation Daily* in the early 1940s. From there he developed an eminent career as a journalist, which lasted until 1986, when he retired from the position of editor-in-chief of the Shaanxi Branch of the New China News Agency. See Feng, "Dangbao peiyang le wo," 185–89.
5. Throughout his career, Feng got himself into trouble multiple times for reporting the "truth" at the grassroots level. Qiao, " 'Tiejian dan daoyi' de Feng Senling."
6. Chen, *Pingyao ji*, 22.
7. "Yanshi kaizhan 'Shiyi yundong,' " *JFRB*, 8/26/1944.
8. Wang, "Manhuajia Su Guang." In this article, Su Guang (1918–1999) recalls that he had joined a mobile medical team with three female doctors and three female nurses. They arrived at Panlong in the summer of 1944 and met "obstructions" by the "Red-Shoed Demoness" in a village. With the medical team's cooperation, the police found the guilty shaman. However, I find no other source that mentions the involvement of a medical team.
9. Boltz, "Not by the Seal of Office Alone," 243.
10. Boltz, "Not by the Seal of Office Alone," 241–305; Davis, *Society and the Supernatural*, 241–305; Kang, *Cult of the Fox*, 161–90.
11. Boltz, "Not by the Seal of Office Alone," 283.
12. "SGN bianqu gaodeng fayuan pida," in *FLFG*, 131–32, see 131.
13. Interviews by the author in Shijiashan 史家山 village, May 17, 2018. Among the interviewees were one woman in her fifties, two men in their fifties, one eighty-two-year-old woman, and one eight-five-year-old man. According to these villagers, Cheng Xiang survived Yan'an's campaign but was caught practicing superstition again in Maoist times and was sentenced to death after his true identity was accidently revealed. I cannot verify this claim with any other sources.

14. See, e.g., Yu, "Rest, Rest"; Zeitlin, *Phantom Heroine*; Huntington, "Ghosts Seeking Substitutes"; and Yu, *Sanctity and Self-Inflicted Violence*, 105–14.
15. Liu, "HeHuang diqu mao guishen"; Liang, "Xibei diqu 'mao guishen'"; Gai, "Zhongguo xibu mao guishen." See also Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 50. In Yan'an, the campaign propaganda once criticized shamans for using ritual violence to treat women's mental disorders under the pretext that the women were haunted by hairy ghost-spirits. See Mu, "Wushen de pianshu." On fox spirits, see Kang, *Cult of the Fox*, 72–126.
16. Zhang and Lu, *Lishi qiu zhuye*, 84.
17. Wang, "Shaanbei diqu mao guishen"; Liang, "Xibei diqu 'mao guishen.'"
18. Wang and Cao, "Bao'an xian Wuling wan." This article was written in 1988, the authors being two high-ranking legal officials in Shaanxi Province and Zhidan County, respectively. They reminisced that their close relatives had had personal encounters with the spirit. On Ma's legal inventions, see Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 175–208.
19. Ahern, "Power and Pollution"; Furth, *A Flourishing Yin*.
20. Li, *Zhengzhi huibu*, 247. The condition is also known as "blood swooning" (*xueyun* 血暈). See Wu, *Reproducing Women*, 157, 193–99.
21. See, e.g., Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 155–56; Scott, *For Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors*, 186–87.
22. Gai, "Zhongguo xibu mao guishen," 102–4.
23. Roberts, *Maoist Model Theatre*, 94–101, quotation at 99.
24. Ko, *Every Step a Lotus*; Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, 69–106, 177–78.
25. "Wochuan na hongxie wo haokan 我穿那紅鞋我好看," in *Lushui dili chuan hongxie*, 180.
26. On these songs, see *Lushui dili chuan hongxie*, 61–62, 77, 84. The title of this collection comes from a folk song on page 80. It translates as "Wearing Red Shoes in the Dewy Field," alluding to love affairs. Words in parentheses here and below are vocables to facilitate the flow of the song without literal meanings.
27. "Wo tuole hongxie na suobiao 我脫了紅鞋拿梭標," in *Lushui dili chuan hongxie*, 69.
28. "Hongjun laile Baijun zou 紅軍來了白軍走," in *Lushui dili chuan hongxie*, 69.
29. Chen, "Qianji 前記," in *Pingyao ji*, 1–2; Chen and Zha, *Wo yu Ding Ling wushinian*, 84. Ding, "*Shaanbei fengguang* jiaohou gan," 50–53. On Ding Ling, see Feuerwerker, *Ding Ling's Fiction*, 99–105; Barlow, *Question of Women*, 190–252.
30. Ding, "Geju *Baimaonü* ersan shi," 9–10.
31. Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 215–342.
32. Hung, "Reeducating a Blind Storyteller," 403.
33. Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 187–88.
34. Jones, *Ritual and Music of North China*, 29–32.
35. Hung, "Reeducating a Blind Storyteller," 402.
36. Jones, *Ritual and Music of North China*, 31–41; Wu, *Reinventing Chinese Tradition*, 87–104; Guan, "'Shaanbei shuoshu' zhong 'ping'anshu,'" 104; Cao, *Shaanbei shuoshu yinyue tanjiu*, 131–75; Sun, *Tanqi sanxian ding zhunyin*, 42–62; Liu and Ren, "Zongjiao zhexue shiyu xia de Shaanbei shuoshu."

37. Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 143.
38. Lin, "Gaizao shuoshu," *JFRB*, 8/5/1945; Lin, "Mang yiren Han Qixiang," 130–36, see 132; Hung, "Reeducating a Blind Storyteller," 405.
39. Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 144–45, 222–34; Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, 230–31.
40. Lin, "Gaizao shuoshu."
41. Chen, "Qianji," in *Pingyao ji*, 1.
42. Lin, "Gaizao shuoshu"; Hung, "Reeducating a Blind Storyteller," 409; Wu, *Reinventing Chinese Tradition*, 90–92.
43. Su, "Qianyan," dated February 1946, in Su and Zhou, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 1–2.
44. The print version in 1946 lists Su and Zhou Ge 周戈 (?–2000s?) as the playwrights, and Jin Ziguang 金紫光 (1916–2000) and Li Qingsen 李慶森 (1919–1948) as the composers.
45. This Ming novel is attributed to Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中 (1320–1400). For an English translation, see Hanan, *Quelling the Demons' Revolt*. The novel pioneered many fictional works, storytelling tales, and local operas that bore the same or a similar title from Ming through Republican times. See Su, *Pingyao zhuan xilie xiaoshuo*, 90–96.
46. Another Luyi artist, Chen Anbo 陳安波 (1915–1965) composed the music for Chen's tale based on what he had learned from another bard. Chen, "Qianji," in *Pingyao ji*, 1–2.
47. Chen, *Pingyao ji*, 44.
48. Forman, *Report from Red China*, 91–93.
49. Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 333–34.
50. Su and Zhou, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 1–4. The Mountain of Wealth, or Jucai shan 聚財山, is the name of one of the villages where the incident took place.
51. Chen, *Pingyao ji*, 1. The "twentieth year" is a reference to the Republican calendar, with 1911 as the first year.
52. Hendrischke, *Scripture on Great Peace*, 4–30.
53. Holm, *Ideology and Art*, 198–99; Hendrischke, *Scripture on Great Peace*, 1–2; Weller, *Resistance, Chaos and Control*, 33–35, 60–64.
54. According to CCP statistics, from 1937 to 1945, 266,619 people (63,850 households) settled in the Border Region, some moved from the densely populated Suide region in the north, others fled from poverty and natural disasters in the GMD and Japanese controlled areas. Huang, *SGN bianqu shehui jingji shi*, 32–39; Keating, *Two Revolutions*, 93–96.
55. This term would soon become a signature word of the land reform ushered in by the Chinese revolution, meaning, in both economic and political senses, "to stand up," "to be liberated," or "to enter a new world." See William Hinton's classic, *Fanshen*, vii.
56. Su and Zhou, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 44–45.
57. Chen, *Pingyao ji*, 23.
58. Su and Zhou, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 75–79.
59. Su and Zhou, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 36.
60. Chen, *Pingyao ji*, 17.
61. Su and Zhou, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 22.

62. On the honor code of *haohan*, see Hinsch, *Masculinities*, 121–24; Boretz, *Gods, Ghosts and Gangsters*, 11; and Ownby, "Approximations of Bandits."
63. Chen, *Pingyao ji*, 58; Su, "Qianyan," in Su and Zhou, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 1–2. Zhang went on to become Yan'an County chief (1948–1949) and then director of Yan'an region's correctional institute. *Yan'an shizhi*, 774; *Yan'an geming yizhi*, 244. Su's preface misprints his name as Mingzhong 明忠, and Chen calls him Zongming 宗明 instead of Zhongming.
64. The dyad of *wen* and *wu* has been historically critical in Chinese constructions of masculinity. An "ideal man" is expected to possess both *wen* and *wu* in equal balance. Louie and Edwards, "Chinese Masculinity," 140. See also Boretz, *Gods, Ghosts, and Gangsters*, 40–52.
65. Chen, *Pingyao ji*, 58. During the Yan'an period, Party media ascribed the same title to the judge Ma Xiwu. See Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 204–5.
66. On Judge Bao, see Idema, *Judge Bao*; and Blader, *Tales of Magistrate Bao*.
67. Su and Zhou, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 35–44.
68. I follow Anthony Yu's translations of the Hall of Divine Mists and the Big Dipper Palace as they appear in the popular Ming novel, *The Journey to the West* (*Xiyouji* 西遊記), attributed to Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩 (1506–1582). The two palaces are the celestial residences of the Jade Emperor and Queen Mother, respectively. Yu, *Journey to the West*, vol. 1, 191.
69. Chen, *Pingyao ji*, 22–23.
70. Chen, *Pingyao ji*, 24–25.
71. All five songs of these spiritual-official tunes are recorded in Wang's album of thirty-five folk songs released in 2006 by China Record Corporation. Here I draw on the complete English translation and analysis of these five songs in Gibbs, *Song King*, 67–85.
72. Jones, *Ritual and Music of North China*, 38.
73. Wu, *Reinventing Chinese Tradition*, 93–94.
74. Su, "Qianyan," 1–2; On Lu the Third, see Chen, *Pingyao ji*, 78.
75. "Shaanbei gongxue / Xibei wenyi," in *YAWY*, vol. 5, 118–39, see 137.
76. Xiao Jun 蕭軍 (1907–1988)'s diary, November 2, 1944, in *Xiao Jun quanji*, vol. 19, 504.
77. "SGN bianqu gaodeng fayuan pida," 131.
78. In 1957, writer Tian Haiyan 田海燕 (1913–1989) recalled that Shao Zinan 邵子南 (1916–1955) introduced the story in the first issue of *Gushi zazhi* 故事雜誌, a magazine that they started together in the GMD-controlled city of Chongqing in September 1946. However, none of the three issues that they had ever published from October 1946 to January 1947 contains this story. Tian, "Shao Zinan yu minjian wenxue," 194–96. The title of *Red-Shoed Demoness* appears in Hong Kong's *Zhoumo bao* 週末報 on June 11, 1949.
79. Sun, "Jishi xuanchuandui," 240; Zhang, "Kangzhan zhong"; "Geming zhanzheng," 207–208; Zhang et al., "Muxiao yongyuan zai wo xinzhong," 54.
80. *Zhongguo xiquzhi*, 37.
81. Ruan, "Qunzhong wenyi chuangzuo," *RMRB*, 1/10/1949.

82. In his 2003 memoir, a local resident still recalls the Demoness based on Han's storytelling. He, *Pingfan de shenghuo*, 142.
83. Lin, "Mang yiren Han Qixiang," 131; Han, "Meiyou Gongchandang"; Hu, *Han Qixiang pingzhuan*, 66.
84. Chen, "Qianji," in *Pingyao ji*, 2; Hu, *Han Qixiang pingzhuan*; Hung, "Reeducating a Blind Storyteller"; Jones, *Ritual and Music of North China*, 29, 45–54, 59–63.
85. Hung, "Reeducating a Blind Storyteller."
86. This was how Han told "Liu Qiao'er Reunion," a popular story propagating CCP marriage reform. Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 238–43.
87. Jones, *Ritual and Music of North China*, 44–73. Of *Han Qixiang wenji*, the complete collection of Han's works in three volumes, two volumes comprise only traditional tales.
88. Han, "Meiyou Gongchandang," 56.
89. Lin, "Mang yiren Han Qixiang," 136. See also how Han performed at Yan'an's Xinhua bookstore in Fu, "Ji shuoshuren Han Qixiang," *JFRB*, 8/5/1945.
90. Han, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 237–52.
91. Hu, *Han Qixiang pingzhuan*, 93–94; Hung, "Reeducating a Blind Storyteller," 406–8. A telling contrast to the *Demoness* story is Han's other tale created around the same time entitled "Struggle against Shamans" (Fan wushen 反巫神). The story follows the official line of criticizing shaman healers and promoting public health. The title still appears on the Yan'an municipal government's online list of Shaanbei storytelling tales and is performed in new adapted versions. See www.zgya.com/shuoshu, accessed February 23, 2018.
92. I thank Ms. Han Yinglian 韓應蓮, daughter of Han Qixiang, who shared with me the information about this manuscript and other aspects of Han's life on May 16, 2018.
93. The "Coiling Dragon," or Panlong qu 蟠龍 (盤龍) 渠, refers to Panlong qu 蟠龍區, the district where the haunting happened.
94. Han sets the story in 1943, a year earlier than the actual event. It is an obvious error, either on the part of Han's own memory or a mis-transcription.
95. Han, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 237.
96. Han, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 246.
97. Han, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 247.
98. Han, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 240–41.
99. Han, *Hongxie nüyaojing*, 244–45.
100. In Chen's tale, the Zhangs are an old couple rather than a family of three. They do suffer hardship while fleeing the haunted village, but Chen recounts nothing about the strange cough, nor do the couple die. Chen, *Pingyao ji*, 35–38.
101. Ruan, "Qunzhong wenyi chuangzuo."

Chapter 6

1. Huang, *Ouyang Shan pingzhuan*, 245–47; Tian, *Ouyang Shan pingzhuan*, 259–60.

2. Ouyang, "*Gao Ganda* zaiban xuyan," 72–73.
3. Xie, "Ouyang Shan jiqi chuangzuo duanlun," 343–53; Tian, "Huan *Gao Ganda* yi yingyou de lishi diwei," in *RXQS*, 115–32; Hsia, *History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 473 and 480; McDougall and Louie, *Literature of China*, 227–28; Imbach, "Not Afraid of Ghosts," 134–44. The only translation of the novel outside of China was by Japanese scholar Masako Tada 多田正子 and was printed by the Tokyo-based Sibundo Shinkosha in 1984.
4. On Ouyang's life, see Huang, *Ouyang Shan pingzhuan*; and Tian, *Ouyang Shan pingzhuan*. On *A Romantic Generation*, see Hsia, *History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 480; McDougall and Louie, *Literature of China*, 228; and Liu, *Revolution Plus Love*, 178–83.
5. Hsia, *History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 480.
6. Huang, *Ouyang Shan chuangzuo lun*, 20–22; *Ouyang Shan pingzhuan*, 209; McDougall and Louie, *Literature of China*, 227.
7. Ouyang, "Woxie dazhong xiaoshuo," 52–58; Huang, *Ouyang Shan pingzhuan*, 152–53, 201–25.
8. Huang, *Ouyang Shan pingzhuan*, 229–30.
9. Ouyang, "MaLie zhuyi," *JFRB*, 5/19/1941.
10. Tian, *Ouyang Shan pingzhuan*, 237–43.
11. Liu, "Gei Ouyang Shan tongzhi de xianci," 23.
12. Ouyang, "Wenxue shenghuo wushiwu nian," 134.
13. Ouyang, "Huozai xin shehui li" and Ding, "Tian Baolin," *JFRB*, 6/30/1944. Ding declared in 1950 that she was not happy with the essay at all; see "*Shanbei fengguang* jiaohouji," 52–53. In 1982, Ouyang recalled that he and Ding were both surprised that these two "short" and "rough" essays had caught Mao's attention. Ouyang, "Xiangqi Mao Zedong," 4194.
14. Mao, "To Ding Ling and Ouyang Shan," July 1, 1944.
15. Hai, "Mofan de Nanqu hezuoshe," *JFRB*, 5/25/1941.
16. See the editorial titled "Guanche hezuoshe minban zhengce" in *JFRB*, 9/8/1942; see also Huang, *SGN bianqu shehui jingji shi*, 495–500. Keating points out that this kind of "comprehensive" cooperative usually operated at the district and county levels, and that few village cooperatives "ran more than one or two enterprises." *Two Revolutions*, 188–91.
17. Mao, *Jingji wenti yu caizheng wenti*, 44.
18. Many reported on the South District Cooperative in the following years, including Ke and Fu, "Mofan de Yan'an Nanqu hesuoshe," *JFRB*, 5/16/1942 and 5/17/1942; and Mo, "Liu Zhuren," *JFRB*, 2/13/1943.
19. Li, "Ouyang Shan xiansheng fangtan," 68; Jin, "Ouyang Shan zai Nanqu hezuoshe," 93–98; Yan, "Ouyang Shan nianpu," 408–409. In 1943, Ouyang divorced Cao Ming 草明 (1913–2002), a fellow leftist writer from his Shanghai times, and in 1944 married her younger sister, Yu Xun.
20. Imbach, "Not Afraid of Ghosts," 136.
21. Hai, "Mofan de Nanqu hezuoshe"; Ke and Hua, "Mofan de Yan'an Nanqu hesuoshe"; Mo, "Liu Zhuren."

22. "Bianqu hezuoshe lianxi huiyi," *JFRB*, 6/28/1944; "SGN bianqu hezuoshe," July 7, 1944, in *HSDA*, 281–85. Even though there may have been medical cooperatives established before then, the first officially publicized medical cooperative in Yan'an was founded in 1944. See "Yanshi dazhong weisheng hezuoshe," in *YWMF*, 56–70.
23. Mo, "Liu Zhuren."
24. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 199, 210. The shamans appear in the *Liberation Daily* in the following order: Yang Hanzhu in Mu, "Benshi Baijiaping" (4/29/1944); Wang Junkui in Bai, "Women zenyang he wushen zuo douzheng" (5/18/1944); Bai Conghai in "Wushen Bai Conghai de tanbai" (6/18/1944); Zheng Shengrong in "Yanxian wushen Zheng Shengrong" (7/23/1944); Cheng Xiang in Feng, "Nao 'gui' " (8/12/1944).
25. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 227–29.
26. "Liu Jianzhang shouchuang yiyao hezuoshe," *JFRB* 6/16/1944; "Liu Jianzhang de yiyao weisheng hezuoshe," in *YWMF*, 92–94.
27. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 157.
28. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 157.
29. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 126; Kuo, *Uncle Kao*, 12.
30. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 128; Kuo, *Uncle Kao*, 16.
31. Chen, "Peasant and Woman."
32. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 162; Kuo, *Uncle Kao*, 94.
33. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 163; Kuo, *Uncle Kao*, 95.
34. Liu, "Fuxian Jia Hongkui," *JFRB*, 6/22/1944. According to this story, a woman fell sick after being bitten by a snake while washing clothes in a river. She asked a shaman for a cure, and several shamans responded by raising funds (read: swindling money) to build a temple for the snake-spirit as a patron deity for the woman and the community. The local government intervened, and shamans were struggled against in a mass meeting.
35. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 241.
36. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 241; Kuo, *Uncle Kao*, 271.
37. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 251; Kuo, *Uncle Kao*, 288.
38. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 177, 211.
39. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 221.
40. Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 52–58.
41. Katerina Clark, "Socialist Realism with Shores," cited in King, *Milestones*, 60–61.
42. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 189.
43. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 189.
44. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 189–90.
45. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 224.
46. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 224.
47. Ouyang, *Gao Ganda*, 225.
48. Qin, "Zai beijixing de zhiyin xia," *Nanfang ribao*, 5/20/1962.
49. Huang, *Ouyang Shan pingzhuan*, 244–45; Tian, *Ouyang Shan pingzhuan*, 256–58.
50. Hsia, *History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 480–81.
51. Zhao, "Jieshao yiben hao xiaoshuo," *RMRB*, 10/7/1948.

52. Hu, "Dule *Gao Ganda*," *Huabei wenyi*, 12/15/1949; Zhu, "Ping Ouyang Shan." See also the discussion among several Shanghai-based writers in December 1949, "*Gao Ganda* zuotanhui," 81–90.
53. Zhu, "Ping Ouyang Shan."
54. Hinton, *Fanshen*, 189–90. On the CCP's radical land reform, see DeMare, *Land Wars*.
55. Ouyang, "*Ouyang Shan wenji* zixu," 358.
56. Volland, "1952. March 18," 562–68.
57. Hsia, *History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 473.
58. Tian Hailan, Ouyang's granddaughter, the author of his biography, suggests that the lack of attention given to *Uncle Gao* in the Maoist era was due to the extension of factional politics from Shanghai's League of Left-Wing Writers, implying the debate about the "national defense" literature in the 1930s between Zhou Yang, later the chief architect of Party propaganda, and Lu Xun, Ouyang Shan, and Hu Feng 胡風 (1902–1985). Tian, "Huan *Gao Ganda* yi yingyou de lishi diwei," 117. While Tian's suggestion is plausible, neither Tian nor any other scholar has provided any concrete evidence to support it.
59. Feng, "Ouyang Shan de *Gao Ganda*," 91–93; Zhu, "Ping Ouyang Shan"; Huang, "Wenyi de shidaixing," 33–37.
60. *Uncle Gao* was translated into Hungarian (1952), English (1957), French (1959), and Russian (1961) by the Beijing Foreign Language Press. The Russian translator's preface indicates that the translation project was to showcase how, after having completed the land reform, Chinese peasants would pursue a new life though the cooperative movement. Pahuomofu [Пахомов], "Ouyang Shan *Gao Ganda*," 556–57.
61. *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shi*, 503. See also excerpts on *Gao Ganda* culled from fifteen scholarly books on modern Chinese literature from the 1980s to the 2000s, in *Ouyang shan yanjiu wenji*, 125–200.

Chapter 7

1. Belden, *China Shakes the Word*, 89.
2. Goodman, *Social and Political Change*, esp. 45–81; Zhao, " 'Local/Outsider Problem.' "
3. Belden, *China Shakes the World*, 94–95; Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 44–45, 104; Jiang, "From Lu Xun to Zhao Shuli," 187–88.
4. Holm attributes Zhao's success to Zhao's ingenious combination of "prose fiction with performing arts." Holm, "Local Color," 14.
5. Feuerwerker, *Ideology, Power, Text*, 100–45; Jiang, "From Lu Xun to Zhao Shuli"; Wang, " 'Problem Stories' "; Zhang, *Going to the Countryside*, 110–46.
6. For a summary of studies on the new woman, see Bailey, *Women and Gender*, 61–63, 79–80, 91–92; Kang, "Women and the Religious Question," 507–509; and Hershatter, *Women and China's Revolutions*, 142–48.
7. Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 229.

8. Davin, *Woman-Work*, 21–52; Stranahan, *Yan'an Women*; Johnson, *Women, the Family*, 51–89; Glosser, *Chinese Visions*, 167–96; Diamant, *Revolutionizing the Family*, 10–13.
9. Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 144–46. Cong discusses how, based on a famous 1943 legal case in the SGN Border Region, cultural workers portrayed one such young heroine named Liu Qiao'er and her "social mother" to propagate a marriage of "self-determination."
10. Zhou, "Lun Zhao Shuli de chuangzuo," *JFRB,* 8/26/1946. Zhao finished *The Marriage of Young Blacky* in May 1943. *Mao's Talks* were delivered at Yan'an in May 1942, but the CCP did not publish the text until October 19, 1943. See Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 91–94; Jiang, "From Lu Xun to Zhao Shuli," 104. Some CCP sources from the Maoist period understandably emphasize that Zhao's story was inspired by *Mao's Talks*, but others suggest otherwise, saying that, after first reading *Mao's Talks*, Zhao was very excited that the direction he had taken was now officially sanctioned. Shi, "Zhao Shuli tongzhi shengping jilue," 7–15; Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 190–92.
11. Yang, "Cong Taihang wenhua ren zuotanhui," 57. The author Yang Xianzhen 楊獻珍 (1896–1992) was the general secretary of the CCP North China Bureau from 1942 to 1944, working directly under general Peng. Peng's handwritten note was published in the first and many subsequent editions of Zhao's work.
12. Yang, "Cong Taihang wenhua ren zuotanhui," 57.
13. Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 183–84.
14. Zhou, "Lun Zhao Shuli de chuangzuo;" Holm, "Local Color," 14.
15. Zhou, "Lun Zhao Shuli de chuangzuo;" Yu, "Yongbu diaoxie de shanhua."
16. Chen, "Xiang Zhao Shuli fangxiang maijin," *RMRB*, 8/10/1947.
17. Yu, "Yongbu diaoxie de shanhua"; *Xiao Erhei jiehun* [Film, 1964].
18. *Wenyibao* bianjibu, "Xie 'zhongjian renwu,' " *RMRB*, 10/31/1964.
19. Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 426–49, 471–98.
20. "Zhao Shuli zuopin xinian," 511–93, see 512–13; Huang, *Zhao Shuli yanjiu ziliao*, 634–37, 701–703.
21. Hsia, *History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 482.
22. Belden, *China Shakes the World*, 96.
23. Feuerwerker, *Ideology, Power, Text*, 118.
24. Jiang, "From Lu Xun to Zhao Shuli," 190, 204–205.
25. Wang, " 'Problem Stories,' " 228.
26. Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 8 and 14.
27. Zhao may have suffered a degree of poverty, but he did not come from a "poor peasant family," as he and his friends claimed. Belden, *China Shakes the World*, 89–90; Wang, "Zhao Shuli shi zenyang chengwei zuojia de," *RMRB*, 1/16/1949.
28. Here I use "sectarian" to refer to the wide range of devotional communities in rural Shanxi, including traditional sectarian groups and modern redemptive societies, which were structurally more similar to the Christian Church and revolved around spirit-writing, charity, abstinence, and the unity of the Three Teachings. See Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 118–22; Goossaert and Palmer, *Religious Question*, 20–27, 93–108. David Ownby rightly points out that redemptive societies were not

only an urban phenomenon but also appealed to the rural population. See Ownby, "Redemptive Societies," 685–727, esp. 690.

29. Wang, "Zhao Shuli shi zenyang chengwei zuojia de"; Johnson, *Spectacles and Sacrifice*.
30. Belden, *China Shakes the World*, 91; Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 4–20, 23–27, 50–52; Montani, "Zhao Shuli and Socialist Realism," 41–42; Feuerwerker, *Ideology, Power, Text*, 114–16. These sources differ in the timing of Zhao joining the CCP. Dai states that Zhao secretly joined the CCP in 1927 but remained ideologically "confused" during this period. Montani, following Belden, argues that Zhao became a Communist sympathizer only after having served jail time in 1927 for being falsely accused of being a Communist.
31. Arhats are Buddhist enlightened beings charged with protecting the dharma.
32. Goodman, "Licheng Rebellion"; Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 157–59. Historian Sun Jiang argues that the rebellion never happened but was "constructed" retrospectively by the CCP investigators to justify its policy failures and ensuing suppression of the sectarian organizations. While some sectarian groups in Shanxi did collaborate with the Japanese, in the case of the Way of Li Trigram it was more likely that the CCP army attacked the group's ritual gatherings first and forced the group to counterattack, with some members fleeing to the Japanese for help. Sun, "Wenben zhong de xugou."
33. Goodman, "Licheng Rebellion," 224.
34. The CCP post-rebellion investigation states that the Way of Li Trigram was founded in 1936 and expanded quickly in 1940 and 1941. Goodman, *Licheng Rebellion*, 219. But in fact the sect's structure and teachings can be traced back to Master Gao, or Gao Yunlong 郜雲龍, in the 1600s. Master Gao's descendants continued to spread the teachings in Henan, Shandong, Zhili 直隸, and central Shanxi. The sect suffered periodic Qing persecutions, and several generations of its leaders were either exiled or executed. See Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion*, 55–60; Pu, *Mimi jiaomen*, 210–13.
35. Goodman, "Licheng Rebellion"; Goodman, "Revolutionary Women"; Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 157–59.
36. "Wenhua zhanxian shang de yige jinji renwu," *Xinhua ribao* (Huabei), 1/19/1942.
37. Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 158–64.
38. The two pieces were *Shenxian shijie* 神仙世界 and *Wanxiang lou* 萬象樓. Zhao later integrated *Shenxian shijie* into the *Marriage of Young Blacky.* Shi, "Zhao Shuli tongzhi shengping jilue," 12. *Wanxiang lou* is preserved in *Zhao Shuli wenji*, vol. 3, 955–74. Zhao explained in 1963 that *Wanxiang lou* was based on his childhood experiences with sectarian religions and the Licheng rebellion. Zhao, "Yunyong chuantong xingshi," 2032–34.
39. Ter Haar, *White Lotus Teachings*, 16, 100–107; Goossaert, "Irrepressible Female Piety."
40. "JCJ bianqu hunyin tiaoli," 197–201, 205–207; Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 176–77.
41. Liao County is today called Zuo Quan xian 左權縣, renamed after the Communist general who was killed there in a Japanese bombing raid in May 1942.
42. Dong, "Zhao Shuli zenyang chuli," 335–38; Zhao Jin'ao (the investigator of the case), "Yue Dongzhi zhi si yu *Xiao Erhei jiehun*," 700–701. In 2006, the original copy of the county court verdict appeared on the auction market and drew new media attention. Various presses report that the last surviving "felon" insisted that the group had not

in fact killed Yue, and that they had pleaded guilty only after days of being kept in unbearable conditions in a mine pit. They were able to escape the death penalty because they convinced the youngest of them, then a seventeen-year-old minor not subject to adult court justice, to confess to having dealt Yue the final death blow. Zhang, "Xiao Erhei de shuangchong mingyun"; Yuan, "1954"; Yan, "Xiao Erhei benshi."

43. Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 177–78. This partially explains why the accused cadres and some villagers suspected that the real killer was one of Zhi's brothers, who probably believed that Yue was already married to the child bride and hence was having an immoral affair with their sister. The brother thus had a motive to confront Yue and perhaps caused his death. Zhang, "Xiao Erhei de shuangchong mingyun"; Yuan, "1954."
44. Zhao, *Xiao Erhei jiehun*, 1.
45. Zhao, *Xiao Erhei jiehun*, 3; Shapiro, "Marriage of Young Blacky," 86–87. Here and below I follow Shapiro's English translation of the story, except that I use my own translation of "Zhuge Two" and "Fairy Auntie Three" for the two major characters.
46. Feuerwerker, *Ideology, Power, Text*, 123.
47. Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 175–76.
48. Zhao, *Xiao Erhei jiehun*, 17–18; Shapiro, "Marriage of Young Blacky," 108.
49. Zhao, *Xiao Erhei jiehun*, 2–3, 9, 14–15.
50. Zhao, "Yesuan jingyan," *RMRB*, 6/26/1949. Zhao probably would not have modeled the comical Zhuge Two on his father had he known how his father had died. Zhao had left home in 1937, and it was not until he returned in 1945 that he learned that his father had been killed by the Japanese in 1943, shortly after *The Marriage of Young Blacky* was published. Worse still, his father might have escaped death had he not changed his travel plan after having consulted his divination books. Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 215–18.
51. Zhao recalled his father fondly in his later writings, remarking on how much he had learned from his expert farming skills, love for folk art and music, work ethic, and even his knowledge of folk medicine, geomancy, and fortune-telling. Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 22–33.
52. Zhao, *Xiao Erhei jiehun*, 2–3; Shapiro, "Marriage of Young Blacky," 88.
53. On mediums' initiation process, see Kang, *Cult of the Fox*, 98–102, 153–56; Cline, "Female Spirit Mediums"; and Chau and Liu, "Spirit Mediumism in Shaanbei," 107–11.
54. Zhao, *Xiao Erhei jiehun*, 3; Shapiro, "Marriage of Young Blacky," 88.
55. Zhao, *Xiao Erhei jiehun*, 3; Shapiro, "Marriage of Young Blacky," 89.
56. On imperial elite bias against these women, see Cass, *Dangerous Women*, 47–64.
57. Von Glahn, "Enchantment of Wealth," 651–714; Kang, *Cult of the Fox*, 109–11.
58. Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 220–22.
59. Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 179–81.
60. See *Zhongguo huidaomen shiliao jicheng*, vol. 1, 149–201.
61. Naquin shows that the Nine Mansions are "astrological divisions of the sky which, like the eight trigrams, had become associated in popular religion—the White Lotus Tradition in particular—with an array of colors, gods, directions of the compass, elements, numbers, animals, and symbols and objects of all sorts." Many religious

sects in northern China used the Nine Mansions with the eight trigrams in their doctrines or even as part of their name. According to Barend ter Haar, the sect was a popular lay Buddhist movement founded by a monk on Mount Wutai in the late nineteenth century. Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion*, esp. 18, 84, 89–90, 348n71; Ter Haar, "The Way of the Nice Palaces."

62. Zhao, *Xiao Erhei jiehun*, 6; Shapiro, "Marriage of Young Blacky," 92.
63. He Guimei points out that Zhao turned to the traditional theme of "the talent and the beauty" rather than the May Fourth model of love in the novel. He, "Renmin wenyi," 10–11.
64. Zhao, *Xiao Erhei jiehun*, 2, 6–7; Shapiro, "Marriage of Young Blacky," 87, 92–93.
65. Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 182–83; Yu, "Yongbu diaoxie de shanhua," 15–16.
66. Miao, "*Xiao Erhei jiehun* zai Taihang shan"; Dai, *Zhao Shuli zhuan*, 179–82.
67. Bai, "Fujin Dazhong xiyuan," *Xiqu xinbao*, 10/31/1950.
68. Gao, "Yan San xiangu," *Xiqu xinbao*, 5/5/1950; "Xiaoqian tan zenyang yande San xiangu," *Xiqu xinbao*, 6/23/1950.
69. "Tangshan Pingxi yuan," *Xiqu xinbao*, 4/7/1950; Cao, "Gaibian *Xiao Erhei jiehun*," *Xiqu xinbao*, 4/21/1950; Wei and Fei, "Zhongyang suoding xiqu jiemu," *Xiqu xinbao*, 9/1/1950.
70. Xiaofeng, "Tan Pingju *Xiao Erhei jiehun*," *Dagangbao*, 5/22/1950.
71. Chen, "Xin Pingxi *Xiao Erhei jiehun* guanhou," *Xiqu xinbao*, 5/26/1950.
72. Stranahan, "Labor Heroines of Yan'an"; Spakowski, "Yan'an's Labor Heroines."
73. The Border Region's male-to-female sex ratio was already unbalanced in pre-Communist times, at the ratio of 53.67 percent (male) to 46.33 percent (female) in some places. After the Communist arrival, the ratio of men to women in the Yan'an area was 30:1 in 1938, 18:1 in 1942, and 8:1 in 1944. See Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 53–54.
74. Stranahan, *Yan'an Women*, 49–86, 104–109; Johnson, *Women, the Family*, 63–83.
75. On the marriage reform in Yan'an, see Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*.

Chapter 8

1. This propaganda troupe was organized by Ding Ling in August 1937 and comprised mostly urban intellectuals and students. The troupe left Yan'an for the JCJ front lines twice, the first time between September 1937 and July 1938, and the second time, without Ding Ling, from January 1939 to May 1944. NBSC was dissolved in October 1944, with most members joining the Luyi. See "Shiba jituanjun," in *YAWY*, vol. 15, 3–31.
2. In northern China, the term *xiangu* can refer to "fairy maiden" or goddesses in general, or to their spirit mediums, such as the "Fairy Auntie Three" in Chapter 7.
3. Ding, "Geju *Baimaonü* ersan shi," 9–10; Meng, "Xizhantuan he geju *Baimaonü*," 24; Xu, *Zhiqingzhe yanzhong de Zhou Yang*, 12.
4. Meng, "Female Images," 118–36; Meng, "*Baimaonü* yanbian de qishi," 48–69; Li, *50–70 niandai*, 267–311; Meng, "Liushi nian lai geju *Baimaonü*."

5. He et al., "*Baimaonü* de chuangzuo yu yanchu," 252. Two written versions of *White-Haired Woman* (*Baimao nüren* 白毛女人) existed before the story reached Yan'an. One is by Shao Zinan 邵子南 (1916–1955), the other by Lin Man 林漫 (1914–1991), the pen name of Li Mantian 李滿天, a journalist for the *JCJ ribao* 晉察冀日報. Lin's piece was lost. Shao's story was published in a collection called *Yan'an de nüxing* in 1946. Another JCJ-based writer, Luo Libin 羅立斌 (1917–2009), recalled in 1997 that he had written a two-act musical drama entitled *The White-Haired Goddess* (*Baifa nüshen* 白髮女神) in 1941, and that the drama was performed by a propaganda troupe in 1942. See Li, "Wo shi zenyang xiechu xiaoshuo *Baimao nüren* de"; Luo, "Guangyu geju *Baifa nüshen*"; and Bohnenkamp, "Turning Ghosts into People," 30–44.
6. He, "*Baimaonü* yu He Jingzhi," 83–85; Meng, "Geju *Baimaonü* de xushi bianqian shi," 152–56; Tao, "Cong geju dao wuju," 395–98.
7. The creative team included the playwrights He Jingzhi, to whom we were introduced in Chapter 5, and Ding Yi 丁毅 (1920–1998). The composers were Ma Ke 馬可 (1918–1976), Zhang Lu 張魯 (1917–2003), Huanzhi 煥之 (1919–2000), Qu Wei 瞿維 (1917–2002), Xiang Yu 向隅 (1912–1968), Chen Zi 陳紫 (1919–?), and Liu Chi 劉熾 (1921–1998).
8. The opera was first printed in Yan'an in 1946. Further revisions occurred in 1947, 1949, and 1950, and it was finalized in 1953. The plot summary here is based on the 1953 edition.
9. He et al., "*Baimaonü* de chuangzuo yu yanchu," 254. Sources vary on the date of the debut, from late April or May to early June. Xiang and Zhu, "*Baimaonü* zai Yan'an de chuangzuo paiyan," 91–92.
10. Meng, "*Baimaonü* yanbian de qishi," 53.
11. He, "*Baimaonü* yu He Jingzhi (xu)," 44.
12. On the history of *The White-Haired Girl*, see Tao, "Cong geju dao wuju," 395–417. Mao's wife Jiang Qing 江青 (1915–1991) claimed credits for all eight model operas, but she may have only seen *The White-Haired Girl* as late as April 24, 1967, and was minimally involved in the actual production. Li, *50–70 niandai*, 275–76.
13. He et al., "*Baimaonü* de chuangzuo yu yanchu," 249–50.
14. He et al., "*Baimaonü* de chuangzuo yu yanchu," 251.
15. On female deities in northern China, see Pomeranz, "Power, Gender and Pluralism"; Kang, *Cult of the Fox*, 133–47; and Overmyer, *Local Religion in North China*, 129.
16. One can find many examples in the famous Ming novel, *Journey to the West*, translated by Anthony C. Yu.
17. Robinet, *Taoism*, 132.
18. Liu Xiang (77 BCE–6 BCE), *Liexian zhuan*, 7a.
19. Liu, *Liexian zhuan*, 7a. A similar story was recorded in Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343)'s *Baopuzi* 抱樸子, which is discussed in Schipper, *Taoist Body*, 169–70.
20. Li, "Lun 'Maonü,'" 105–30. Today, the Hairy Maiden Cave (Maonü dong 毛女洞) on top of the Hairy Maiden Peak (Maonü feng 毛女峰) is a popular tourist site on Mount Hua.
21. Li, "Lun 'Maonü,'" 123–30.
22. Shao later withdrew from the opera project. Most sources recognize his initial contribution, but the debate on whether he should be credited for the 1945 opera is

unsettled. See Zhang, Qu, and Zhang, "Guanyu *Baimaonü* de tongxin," 59–60; Lu, "Zhang Geng deng si tongzhi," 76–82; and Meng, "Xizhantuan he geju *Baimaonü*," 22. Ge, *Shao Zinan yu Baimaonü*; Bohnenkamp, "Turning Ghosts into People," 27–90, esp. 47–58, 74–76.

23. He et al., "*Baimaonü* de chuangzuo yu yanchu," 253.
24. He et al., "*Baimaonü* de chuangzuo yu yanchu," 253; Meng, "Xizhantuan he geju *Baimaonü*," 23.
25. In the 1946 edition, which was based on the original script in 1945, the opera expresses Zhou's idea as follows: "The Xi'er who was forced to become a ghost has now come back to a life of human." He et al., *Baimaonü* (1946), 101.
26. Meng, "Female Gender and National Myth," 119–22.
27. He et al., *Baimaonü* (1953), 106–107.
28. *Baimaonü* [film, 1950], 1:24:07–1:25:09. This is from the 1950 film script of *The White-Haired Girl*, trans. Pete Nestor and Tom Moran, https://u.osu.edu/mclc/online-series/white/, accessed February 19, 2020.
29. *Baimaonü* [film, 1950], 1:28:54–1:29:55; Nestor and Moran, *White-Haired Girl*.
30. Pomeranz, "Power, Gender and Pluralism"; Kang, *Cult of the Fox*, 133–47; Baptandier, *Lady of Linshui*.
31. He et al., *Baomaonü* (1953), 102.
32. *Baimaonü* [film, 1950], 1:36:36–1:36:48; Nestor and Moran, *White-Haired Girl*.
33. Ter Haar, "China's Inner Demons"; Schoenhals, "Demonising Discourse"; Goossaert and Palmer, *Religious Question*, 170–72.
34. On vengeful ghosts and divine justice in Chinese religion, see Katz, *Divine Justice*, 35. This theme is best illustrated by the famous Yuan play by Guan Hanqing 關漢卿 (c. 1245–1322): *The Injustice to Dou E that Moves Heaven and Shakes Earth* (*Gantian dongdi Dou E yuan* 感天動地竇娥冤). Dou E is wrongly accused and executed but brings her persecutors to final justice through three divine signs she requested to happen before her unjust death. See the English translation in West and Idema, *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals*, 1–36.
35. Meng, "*Baimaonü* yanbian de qishi," 60–61.
36. He et al., *Baomaonü* (1953), 109.
37. The five constants are *ren* 仁 (benevolence), *yi* 義 (righteousness), *li* 禮 (ritual propriety), *zhi* 智 (wisdom), and *xin* 信 (sincerity). The first actress who played Xi'er recalls that in Shao Zinan's early version, Shao used his native Sichuan dialect to name Huang Shiren as a homophone of *wangshiren* 枉是人, "not deserving to be a man," and Mu Renzhi as *meirenzhi* 沒人志, "without human feeling." Wang, "Tan geju *Baimaonü*," 81.
38. The oral story recounted by He Jingzhi mentions no such character. In Shao Zinan's story of *Baimao nüren* and his undated canto entitled *Baimaonü*, Huang's mother was her son's accomplice, but there were no Buddhist elements to her character. See Shao, *Baimao nüren*; Shao, *Baimaonü*, cited in Ge, *Shao Zinan yu Baimaonü*, 1–10.
39. He et al., *Baimaonü*, 42.
40. He et al., *Baimaonü*, 43–44.
41. He et al., *Baimaonü*, 55.

42. Ter Haar, *Telling Stories*, 54–91, 282–321.
43. Ma and Qu, "*Baimaonü* yinyue de chuangzuo jingyan," 274.
44. Ma and Qu, "*Baimaonü* yinyue de chuangzuo jingyan," 270.
45. *Yulan Bowl Sutra*, cited in Grant and Idema, "Introduction," in *Escape from Blood Pond Hell*, 6. On Mulian and Buddhist salvation, see Teiser, *Ghost Festival*; Johnson, *Ritual Opera*; Guo, *Ritual Opera and Mercantile Lineage*; and Berezkin, *Many Faces of Mulian*.
46. See, e.g., Dudbridge, *Legend of Miao-shan*; Idema, *Personal Salvation and Filial Piety*; Grant and Idema, *Escape from Blood Pond Hell*; and Alexander, "Virtues of the Vernacular."
47. Berezkin, *Many Faces of Mulian*, 4.
48. Scholars have identified seven to nine precious scrolls that share the common theme of suffering and salvation in female spiritual cultivation. In addition to *Xiunü baojuan*, there are *Xiangshan baojuan* 香山寶卷, *Huangshi baojuan* 黃氏寶卷, *Liu Xiang baojuan* 劉香寶卷, *Xigu baojuan* 惜穀寶卷, *Hongluo baojuan* 紅羅寶卷, *Miaoying baojuan* 妙英寶卷, *Xinghua baojuan* 杏花寶卷, and *Yuqingting baojuan* 玉蜻蜓寶卷. See Che, *Xinyang, jiaohua, yule*, 20–22; Chen, "Funü xiuxing gushi baojuan yanjiu"; and Alexander, "Virtues of the Vernacular."
49. Che Xilun lists twelve editions of the *Xiunü baojuan*. The earliest is dated 1877 and the latest 1932, all printed in Shanghai or Zhejiang, except for two undated editions (location unknown). Che, *Zhongguo baojuan zongmu*, 304.
50. Alexander, "Virtues of the Vernacular," 231–32.
51. On the Chinese conceptions of the ten courts of hell via Buddhist influence, see Teiser, *Scripture of the Ten Kings*.
52. On the synopsis of the story, see also Alexander, "Virtues of the Vernacular," 230–34.
53. Zhang, "*Baimaonü* de shidaixing," *JFRB*, 7/2/1945. Zhang's questions and other dissenting voices were quickly suppressed. Lu Dingyi, the head of the Party's Propaganda Department at the time, allegedly reacted to Zhang's piece by saying that these literary critics should be subjected to another round of Rectification. Wang, "Wang Lin riji zhong," 170.
54. *Xiunü baojuan*, 21b.
55. Lee, "Nowhere in the World," 149.
56. Meng, "Female Images," 122.
57. Frijda, Manstead, and Bem, "Influence of Emotions on Beliefs," 1–9; Corrigan, *Religion and Emotion*; Van Gent and Young, "Introduction," 461–67; Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*.
58. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions"; Plamper, "History of Emotions," 253.
59. Van Gent, "Burden of Love," 557–74.
60. Huijiao 慧皎 (497–554), *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, cited in Grant and Idema, "Introduction," in *Escape from Blood Pond Hell*, 3–4.
61. Huang, *Charisma and Compassion*, 124–52.
62. Billioud, *Reclaiming the Wilderness*, 205.
63. Watson, "Fighting with Operas," 311–24; Johnson, *Spectacle and Sacrifice*, 326–29; Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 147–68.

64. *Mao's Talks*, 125; Lee, "Nowhere in the World," 149.
65. Perry, "Moving the Masses."
66. Liu, "Maoist Discourse," 329–62.
67. Li, "Guanyu *Baimaonü*," *JFRB*, 7/17/1945; Ai, "*Baimaonü* yu guanzhong," *Jizhong daobao*, 8/12/1946.
68. Ding, "Qiantan 'tu' yu 'yang,'" 172. The *Liberation Daily* provides a similar description in "*Baimaonü* zai nongcun li," *JFRB*, 9/7/1946.
69. Belden, *China Shakes the World*, 210.
70. Both reported in He et al., "*Baimaonü* de chuangzuo yu yanchu," 255.
71. This episode appeared in two articles on the same page of the Hebei-based CCP newspaper, *Jizhong daobao*, 8/12/1946: Zhao, "*Baimaonü* de yanchu," and Xie, "*Baimaonü* guanhou." It has become a well-known anecdote of multiple versions of the opera. See He, "*Baimaonü* yu He Jingzhi (xu)," 42–43.
72. Zhang, "Lishi jiushi jianzheng," *RMRB*, 3/13/1977; Li, *50–70 niandai*, 288; DeMare names the opera as "the most influential land reform opera" in *Mao's Cultural Army*, 115–19.
73. Zhao, "*Baimaonü* de yanchu"; Tao, "Cong geju dao wuju"; Li, *50–70 niandai*, 288.
74. Zhang, "Lishi jiushi jianzheng"; DeMare, *Mao's Cultural Army*, 96–97.
75. "Luyi gongzuotuan yanchu *Baimaonü*," *JFRB*, 6/10/1945; Chang, "*Baimaonü* guanhougan," *JFRB*, 8/2/1945; Li, "*Baimaonü* jiaoyu le wo," *Jizhong daobao*, 8/12/1946.
76. Zhang, Xiao, Ye, et al., "Zuotan geju *Baimaonü* de xin yanchu," 746.
77. Ding, "Renmin de 'Xi'er,'" 12–14.
78. Yao, "*Baimaonü* jinjun Shanghai," 485–92.
79. Bodde, *Peking Diary*, 165–69.
80. Landman, *Profile of Red China*, 82–85.
81. He, "*Baimaonü* yu He Jingzhi (xu)"; Ding, "Renmin de 'Xi'er,'" 13; Xiang and Zhu, "*Baimaonü* zai Yan'an," 92–93; Huang, "*Baimaonü* de gushi," 122.
82. He, "*Baimaonü* yu He Jingzhi," 91.
83. Zhang, "Geju *Baimaonü* zai Yan'an," 7.
84. He, "*Baimaonü* yu He Jingzhi," 86.
85. Liu, "Kan *Baimaonü* hou," *RMRB*, 2/12/1947.
86. On the CCP's superior propaganda power, see Holm, *Art and Ideology*, 321; Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 10, 30; Perry, "Moving the Masses"; and DeMare, *Mao's Cultural Army*.

Chapter 9

1. Esherick, "Deconstructing the Party-State"; Cong, *Marriage, Law, and Gender*, 183–206. Keating shows that the CCP's democratic initiatives were geographically limited to the immediate surroundings of Yan'an in "The Yan'an Way" and *Two Revolutions*, 242–44.

2. Wen, "Quanjiafu nianhua," *JFRB*, 3/22/1945; Yu, "Guanyu nianhua," *JFRB*, 3/22/1945; Li et al., "Guanyu xin de nianhua," *JFRB*, 4/12/1945; Yi et al., "Guanyu nianhua," *JFRB*, 5/18/1945. See also Landsberger, "Mao as the Kitchen God," 197–98.
3. DeMare, *Mao's Cultural Army*, 136–40. Compromises between Party cadres and local authority figures were an important factor in the CCP's propaganda victory over their GMD rivals. See Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, 107–108.
4. On connecting religion with the ruling class in CCP propaganda, see Hinton, *Fanshen*, 165–85; Smith, *Thought Reform*, 97–98; and Goossaert and Palmer, *Religious Question*, 146–50.
5. Idema, *Metamorphosis of Tianxian pei*; Wang, "Wugui zhi guo"; Greene, *Resisting Spirits*; Zhang, *Lilian jinghun*, 167–208.
6. Schoenhals, "Demonising Discourse."
7. Smith, "Talking Toads" and "Fear and Rumour"; Li, *Xushi zhijian*.
8. Goossaert, "Diversity and Elite Religiosity," 15–17.
9. The film script was published in *Renmin wenxue* in its June 1959 issue (pp. 97–128).
10. Gong, "Tantan minzu dianying chuangzuo," 30; Li, *Yunnan shaoshu minzu*, 37.
11. On "minority woman" as a trope in the CCP's civilizing narrative, see Harrell, "Introduction," 8–24; Gladney, "Representing Nationality," 92–123; and Schein, *Minority Rules*. On the parallel processes of Communist constructions of *funü* 婦女 (women) and *shaoshu minzu* 少數民族 (ethnic minority), see Barlow, *Question of Women*, 37–63.
12. The script was written by Huang Zongjia 黃宗江 (1921–2010), a Beijing artist from a family of renowned cultural workers, and published in 1964. The director was Li Jun 李俊 (1922–2013), a veteran of the Yan'an cultural circle. The "Orientalist" nature of the film is discussed in Powers, *History as Propaganda*, 122–27.
13. *Nongnu* [film]. A book titled *Nongnu: cong juben dao dianying* appeared in 1965. It is a collection of testimonials, reflections, and political blurbs by the film's director, scriptwriter, members of the production team, Tibetan actors and actresses, Han Chinese and Tibetan officials and cultural workers, and about twenty "liberated" Tibetan serfs.
14. On how the Chinese state's rule over a Tibetan society hinged on male monastic conceptions of the world, see Makley, *Violence of Revolution*.
15. *Nongnu* [film], 0:40:12–0:41:00.
16. Tibetans usually refer to the sun as the golden, not red, sun, and the imagery of the "golden sun" was also used to eulogize Mao in the 1960s. Yeshes Vodgsal Atshogs, personal communication, January 14, 2021. A Tibetan native of the Garze region in western Sichuan and a professor of linguistics, Professor Atshogs transcribed the Tibetan names for me and shared with me Tibetan understandings of the film.
17. Powers, *History as Propaganda*, 122–27.
18. Yu, "Yongbu diaoxie de shanhua," 19–20.
19. Tian and Yang, *Xiao Erhei jiehun*, Act 5, 193–95, 205–12.
20. *Xiao Erhei jiehun* [film, 1964], 1:02:41–1:02:49.
21. *Baimaonü* [film, 1972], 1:22:02–1:23:50.
22. *Baimaonü* [film, 1972], 1:30:31–1:31:09.

23. On both the song and the epic, see the documentary and the website of the *Morning Sun* http://www.morningsun.org/east/. On the song, see Mittler, *Continuous Revolution*, 99–111; on the production of the epic, see Chen, "Performing the 'Red Classics,'" 153–59.
24. Gentile, *Politics as Religion*; Roberts, "'Political Religion'"; Leese, *Mao Cult*, 4–12.
25. See, e.g., Schram, "Mao Zedong a Hundred Years On"; Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets*, 245–86; Landsberger, "Mao as the Kitchen God"; Andrew and Rapp, *Autocracy and China's Rebel Founding Emperors*; and Leese, *Mao Cult*.
26. See Chapter 5, Section 1, on the meaning of color red; Zhao and Du, "'Birthday of the Sun,'" 244–76.
27. Mittler, *Continuous Revolution*, 373–76.
28. Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda*; Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*; Froese, *Plot to Kill God*; Smolkin, *Sacred Space*.
29. Goossaert and Palmer, *Religious Question*, 144–55; Dubois, *Sacred Village*; Smith, "Redemptive Religious Societies"; Jiao, "Martial Arts, Apocalypse, and Counterrevolutionaries."
30. Hu and Xiao, "Fan mixin tigang." Fenggang Yang categorizes Chinese Marxist atheism into three kinds: enlightenment atheism, militant atheism, and mild atheism. Yang, *Religion in China*, 3–64.
31. Xi, "Xi Jinping zai wenyi gongzuo zuotan huishang de jianghua."
32. Economy, *The Third Revolution*.
33. Wan and Huang, "Daxue nüsheng."
34. One can find many references to the video and public comments by googling "tielian nü" 鐵鏈女 and "baimaonü 白毛女" in Chinese.

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